

A Dissertation

Entitled

Celluloid Activism: Warner Brothers, Patriotism, and White-Washing in the
American Jewish Struggle for Identity

By

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy in History

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August 2020

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This dissertation analyzes American Jewish identity and assimilation practices through Warner Bros. films produced between 1918 and 1941. It argues that Warner Bros. films not only reflected the Warner brothers' (Harry, Abe, Sam and Jack) individual identity politics, Warner Bros. Studio productions depicted the strains facing the assimilated Jew, the cost of assimilation, and the means by which Jews attempted to gain status as "white." This dissertation evaluates the brothers' film-based Americanization campaign in which they redefined the American Jewish experience by redefining Americanization. The brothers used patriotism as the cornerstone of their Americanization campaign. Through the use of patriotic symbolism and themes, including the adoption of racism, the brothers sought to refine their own status, minimize anti-Semitism, make money, and effectively reimagine themselves as Americans rather than American Jews. Through a series of interdependent phases, the brothers' Americanization campaign challenged social and industry norms, while preaching patriotism and redefining Americanism in a way that befitted conflicting ideological beliefs on assimilation.

For Eloise and Charley. May you shut out the doubts others try to put in your head.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the dedication of the incredible and knowledgeable staff at the National Archives at College Park, Margaret Herrick Library, and the University of Southern California Cinematic Arts Library. A special thanks to Brett Service, curator of Warner Bros. Archive, for your invaluable long distance assistance and guidance.

To my advisors: Dr. Kim Nielsen, thank you for taking a chance on me and for your constant and continued support. Without you, this dissertation would never have come to fruition. Dr. Todd Michney, your willingness to gamble on a graduate student abandoned enabled me to continue on my historical path. Dr. Larry Wilcox and Dr. Michael Jakobson, thank you both for rekindling my love of history and for reminding me that history can change lives.

To my teachers, mentors, friends, and family—this dissertation would not have been possible without all of your support, patience, and direction. Chelsea Griffis, I thank you for your time, critiques, and for reminding me that an end was possible. To my husband Chad and daughters, Eloise and Charley, you are my home and my loves. I am forever indebted to you.

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Chapter One

Introduction: “The Proof of the Pudding is in the Eating.”

When Harry Warner presented himself before the Senate Subcommittee on War Propaganda on September 25, 1941, he armed himself with his trademark quick-wit and a lengthy written statement. Like Jewish Hollywood counterparts before and after him, Warner came to Washington in an effort to protect the name of his studio, Warner Bros. (WB), and himself against accusations of un-American activities.¹ Hollywood was accused of creating propaganda films aimed at propelling the United States (U.S.) into another European conflict.² As president of Warner Bros. Studio, the responsibility of protecting its reputation fell primarily on him, a task that he steadfastly adhered to and from which he took great comfort and pride. For Warner, one of five Jewish moguls called to testify, the hearing was of far greater significance than merely protecting the artistic integrity of his studio and Hollywood.³ Warner intuited that the hearing was

¹ Propaganda in Motion Pictures: Hearings before a Senate Subcommittee on Interstate Commerce, United States Senate (Seventy-Seventh Congress, First Session), on Senate Resolution 152; A Resolution Authorizing an Investigation of War Propaganda Disseminated by the Motion Picture Industry of any Monopoly in the Production, Distribution, or Exhibition of Motion Pictures, September 9 to 26, 1941. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1942. See also Hearing Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce: Moving Picture Screen and Radio Propaganda, Governmental and Political Activity, folder 2947, 893, *Warner Bros. Archives (WBA)*. Besides Warner Bros. Studios, Paramount Pictures and Loew's Inc., were also called to testify. They were represented by Barney Balaban and Nicholas M. Schenck, respectively.

² For the purpose of this paper, propaganda will be used in two, often competing, definitions. The Committee's definition focused on governmental intervention and will be defined as official government communications to the public that were designed to influence opinion, regardless of its validity, selected for political effect. In reference to the Warner brother's use, propaganda will be defined as information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular cause or point of view.

³ For the purpose of this paper, the term mogul will be adopted as a historical term, referring to the Jewish heads of Hollywood movie studios. Largely affiliated with the Hollywood studio system of the Hollywood's Golden Age, the term is racially charged and discriminatory, referring primarily to Eastern European Jewish men, “conjuring up as they do an unfavorable image of a cigar-chewing, language-fracturing, power-mad, philistine ignoramus.” See Philip French, *The Movie Moguls: An Informal History of the Hollywood Tycoons* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1969, 2.

another obstacle in the Jewish struggle for inclusion in American society; one that could be used to combat bigotry, highlight the existence and prevalence of American anti-Semitism, and openly discuss the threat Nazism posed to the world, democracy, and freedom. At stake was national identity and inclusion politics for Jews, as Americans.

The propaganda hearings were an extension of the post-World War I anti-radical government sponsored persecution that had focused on anarchists, Bolsheviks, Socialists, labor organizers, Bolshevik sympathizers, and potential sympathizers, many of which were Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Associated with radical tendencies and connection to Russia, Eastern European Jews were especially susceptible to persecution during the period that became known as the first “Red Scare.” Permeated by Jews of Eastern European descent, Hollywood became a special target for the US government, J. Edgar Hoover and the newly created Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in particular.⁴ Spanning well into the 1930s, Hollywood writers, directors, and moguls were investigated, at times covertly, for treasonous acts of un-American activities which included, but were not limited to, creating films that supported labor unions, such as Warner Bros. Studio’s, *Black Fury* (1935).⁵ Although Hollywood proved difficult to infiltrate by government agents, governmental intervention proved questionable and unnecessary following the appointment of anti-Semite and devout Catholic, Joseph

⁴ Lori Shaller and Judith Rosenbaum, “Jewish Radicalism and the Red Scare: Introductory Essay,” *Living the Legacy*, online <https://jwa.org/teach/livingthelegacy/jewish-radicalism-and-red-scare-introductory-essay>, retrieved October 22, 2017.

⁵ John Sbartellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies: The FBI and the Origins of Hollywood’s Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 24-30.

Breen, as director of the new and industry-created Production Code Administration (PCA).⁶

Between the 1930s and the 1940s, Breen limited the production of films that the U.S. government previously deemed “subversive,” questionable, and too “Jewish.”⁷ The Eastern European Jewish Hollywood problem, however, did not subside. As Europe became ravished by war in the late 1930s and early 1940s, independent government officials, such as Senator Gerald Nye of North Dakota, perpetuated the claim that Hollywood had succeeded in creating propaganda films, despite the influence of the PCA. Specifically, Nye claimed that Hollywood propaganda films manipulated the American people toward the fulfillment of sinister motives, such as greed, and the attainment of other personal goals or agendas, including war.⁸ Significantly, although

⁶ Ibid, 39-40. According to Sbardellati, Hollywood’s Cold War did not begin in earnest until after World War II for three reasons. First, conservatism suspicions of Bolshevism in Hollywood were not “yet woven into the fabric of a broader struggle against Communism.” Conditions had not yet materialized into an ideological struggle between the US and the Soviet Union, thus “the ruckus over Reds in Hollywood could not stir up national security needs.” Second, politicized forces on the Left and the Right had not yet mobilized over the content of films, organizations focused on the destruction of the other had “yet to fully register its impact.” Finally, despite the FBI’s and senate’s focus on Hollywood as representations of US interest in the goings-on of Hollywood, the federal government was “on the sidelines” over the political content of Hollywood films.

⁷ See Harold Brackman, “The Attack on ‘Jewish Hollywood’: A Chapter in the History of modern anti-Semitism,” *Modern Judaism*, 20, 1 (February, 2000), 1-19.

⁸ Steven Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History up to World War II* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 63. Senator Gerald Nye of North Dakota headed the investigation against the armaments industry which aided in the revelation that there was a deliberate connection between the public relations campaign that “fanned” anti-German sentiment, pushing the United States into war, resulting in the maximizing of arms industry profits. This would not be Nye’s first inquisition against Hollywood. In 1941 he would help spearhead an investigation against Jewish Hollywood mogul based on the same claims in relation to World War II. See also *Propaganda*, 5-6, and Michael E. Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers: Warner Bros.’s Campaign Against Nazism*, New York, NY: New York University Press, 1999), 159-160. During his testimony before the Senate Subcommittee, Nye insisted that his claims were in no way motivated by anti-Semitism. Despite proof in the form of public speeches and personal statements to the press, Nye insisted that he was not an anti-Semite—he was friends with Jews. See also, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, “Senators Nye, Clark Seek to Rouse Anti-Semitism, Willkie Charges in Statement to JTA, (September 11, 1941), retrieved April 22, 2017 <http://www.jta.org/1941/09/11/archive/senators-nye-clark-seek-to-rouse-anti-semitism-willkie-charges-in-statement-to-jta>.

Eastern European Jews were specifically targeted for their radical views, Nye viewed *all* Jews as threats, and by default, *all* of Hollywood as controlled by Jews.

The U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Propaganda became the extension of Nye's attack on "Hollywood" and would ultimately become the precursor for House Un-American Activities Committee's (HUAC) attacks on "Communist" Hollywood following World War II (WWII). Propelled by isolationists and known anti-Semites, the Subcommittee was motivated by one goal: to prove, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that Hollywood had embarked on a sinister agenda designed to manipulate the American public toward war.⁹ With the assistance of Senator Bennett Clark of Missouri, fellow anti-Semite and isolationist, Nye convinced the Senate Committee that, as Europe grappled with the rise of Hitler, Hollywood had intensified its propaganda drive. Hollywood, Nye stressed, intended on driving the U.S. into another European conflict through the creation of pro-British, anti-Nazi, productions influenced by the Roosevelt Administration. A euphemism for Jews, "Hollywood" became the primary target.¹⁰ In short, through the Senate Subcommittee, Nye argued that Jews were manipulating the American public to achieve their private and political goals at home and abroad. These goals included, but were not limited to, increasing their personal financial gains through U.S. military intervention in Europe, and using the military to alleviate the alleged Jewish plight in Germany. The American public had to be protected. Successful intervention

⁹ The members of the Subcommittee yielded the power to function as both judge and jury. Their decision was final. Furthermore, those called to testify were denied legal counsel. See John Sbardellati, 37-39.

¹⁰ Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How Jews Invented Hollywood*, (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc, 1988), 345; Sbardellati, 37. Nye provided the following speech before an America First rally, "Who are the men who are doing this? Why are they trying to make America punch drunk with propaganda to push her into war?" "The senator then named executives of the major film companies and drew the inevitable conclusion: 'In each of these companies there are a number of production directors, many of whom have come from Russia, Hungary, Germany, and Balkan countries'—people who were 'naturally susceptible' to 'racial emotions.'"

would enable the creation and enforcement of new, more restrictive, censorship regulations coinciding with the isolationist mentality of its creator and enforcers.¹¹ The hearing would, however, come to represent a “flashpoint in the bitter dispute between interventionists and isolationist groups, the center of a debate about the role of mass culture in a democracy, the position of Jews and other ethnic groups in American life, and the meaning of Americanism.”¹²

Warner Bros. Studio was of special significance to the hearings; oldest brother, Harry Warner’s presence was in no way coincidental. The Committee accused Warner Bros. Studio with the production of more “hate...films than any other company in America.”¹³ To confirm the allegation of conspiratorial acts by Warner Bros. Studios, the committee drew evidence from seven films produced between 1933 and 1941. Of these, the Committee discussed five in some detail, but three were the primary focus of the investigation—*Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), *Underground* (1940), and *Sergeant York* (1941).¹⁴ These films, the Committee argued, confirmed Hollywood Jews’ manipulation through the use of visual representation in one, or more, of the following categories: glorification of war, negative imagery of Germans/Nazis, pro-British sentiments, and inciting fear on the U.S. public—each of which, the committee argued,

¹¹ Ibid., Senator Gerald Nye was not alone in bringing up charges of propaganda against Hollywood. While he had initiated the charges, the hearings were the result of his and Senator Bennett Clark urging on the matter. See also John E. Moser, “‘Gigantic Engines of Propaganda’: The 1941 Senate Investigation of Hollywood,” *The Historian* Vol. 63, 4 (June 2001), 731; Sbardellati, 38. Moser also cites Senator Burton Wheeler, chair of the Interstate Commerce Commission, as the instigator of the propaganda hearings.

“According to Wheeler and his allies, the eight largest motion picture companies were taking advantage of their access to the American people to promote involvement in a war that was not America’s concern.”

¹² David Welky, *The Moguls and the Dictators: Hollywood and the Coming of World War II*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p 4.

¹³ Birdwell, 161. In specific, Senators Gerald Nye and Bennet Champ Clark led the charges against Hollywood.

¹⁴ *Propaganda*, 346. Between 1939 and 1941, Warner pointed out, Warner Bros., Studios “produced 140 feature pictures...only 7 [had] been alleged to be propaganda.”

played a role in convincing the American public to participate in another European conflict. As Warner had anticipated, the films in question were not the sole motivation for targeting his studio. Unlike his Hollywood cohorts, it soon became clear that Harry Warner's political and religious beliefs, as a private individual as much as a public figure, were of primary interest in the interrogation. Unapologetically Jewish, unabashed in his fight against Nazism, and willing to use his films as social commentary for the period, Warner, as an individual, was a favorite target for censors, moral reformers, and unsurprisingly, Nye and members of the Subcommittee. Harry, more so than others in Hollywood, understood the power of film and used that power as he saw fit. As such, Warner, committee chairperson Senator Clark of Idaho asserted, influenced the content of films and, through those films, molded the "minds of the American people to incite them to war."¹⁵

In an effort to thwart any charges laid upon him or his studio, Warner began his session with a carefully crafted opening statement. In it, Warner openly confirmed his disdain for Nazism, his desire to see its destruction, and his willingness to discuss his views in a candid manner to anyone who sought his opinion. Significantly, however, he omitted any discussion of Judaism, and carefully circumvented the topic of anti-Semitism—including the Subcommittee members association to it. These omissions were deliberate, as members of the Subcommittee, as well as Warner, had a vested interest in not discussing these topics publicly. While Warner, as an individual and a representative of Warner Bros. Studio, had omitted anti-Semitism in open discussion policy as a way of

¹⁵ Ibid., 383. See Governmental and Political Activity, folder 2947, 893, *WBA*. Senator Clark of Idaho attempted to capitalize on Harry Warner's admissions as proof of his and his studio's guilt of inciting a pro-war mentality in the United States. Clark charged the films as propaganda, claiming they could be referred to as "sabotage" since they had the potential of "destroy[ing] our country forever."

eliminating unwanted attention to himself, his studio, and his brothers, the members of the Subcommittee wanted to present the hearings as unbiased. They further wanted to ensure that their own personal anti-Semitic beliefs did not come to light or interfere with the perception of neutrality that they were attempting to present to the U.S. public.

Warner clearly asserted that he abhorred Nazism and was willing to do anything in his power to see its destruction.¹⁶ Harry was adamant; his personal views did not influence the direction taken within his company or the films it produced.¹⁷ The imitation of life through art was purely coincidental, with one glaring exception—Harry's overwhelming love and loyalty for the U.S. and the democratic values and freedoms that it represented.

Warner summarized:

I am opposed to nazi-ism (*sic*). I abhor and detest every principle and practice of the Nazi movement. To me, nazi-ism typifies the very opposite of the kind of life every decent man woman, and child wants to live. I believe nazi-ism is a world revolution whose ultimate objective is to destroy our democracy, wipe out all religion, and enslave our people—just as Germany has destroyed and enslaved Poland, Belgium, Holland, France, and all the other countries. I am ready to give myself and all my personal resources to aid in the defeat of the Nazi menace to the American people. I realize that my convictions, of themselves, are unimportant. However, I am proud of them. As a matter of fact I have never made a secret of them. ... for the record of the hearing and to avoid misrepresentation, I should like to summary my convictions. They are not newly found convictions. They are deep-rooted.¹⁸

Warner testified that his love for democracy and fierce patriotism prompted the production of films that stressed upon the American people the truth of Nazism. Warner Bros. had not produced films such as *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, *Underground*, and *Sergeant York* to entice the American people to war, as the Subcommittee alleged, nor had they been created to enhance pro-British sentiments or at the request of the

¹⁶ *Propaganda*, 373

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 338.

Roosevelt administration. On the contrary, the films in question highlighted U.S. values and democratic ideals, stressed the inherent dangers Nazism posed to the U.S. and its people, showcased U.S. heroism, and argued for peace. Harry furthered that the committee would have been aware of these messages had they taken the time to watch the films before the hearings commenced, a revelation that arose as the hearings proceeded.¹⁹ Warner insisted that the American people were not being coerced or manipulated toward war; they were simply privileged to a dramatization of the truth, a truth Warner felt anybody who loved America had a right to know.²⁰

Furthermore, while it was true that the films in question possessed qualities that could hurt or offend the sensibilities of some, Warner insisted that only Nazi sympathizers would be incited by their content.²¹ Warner further contended that he was unable to control the response of viewers to the films produced by Warner Bros. Studio any more than he was able to control the decision patterns of movie-goers that resulted in their patronage of Warner Bros. films and theaters.²² Like other Hollywood studios, Warner Bros. Studio was in the business of producing entertainment—a mandate stressed by both the Hays Office and the PCA, Hollywood formed internal censorship bodies controlling

¹⁹ Ibid., 370. Of the movies in question, only two had been viewed, *Sergeant York* and *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. However, only two members had taken the time to see them. After watching *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Senator Nye gave the film a rave review, proclaiming its patriotic qualities, his desire to have all Americans watch it, and for the production of other such “propaganda” films.

²⁰ Ibid., 347.

²¹ Ibid., 375. Warner reasoned that Nazi sympathizers would have been incited because of the truthful nature in which Nazis were portrayed in Warner’s films. In response to Sen. Clark, “I say it will not incite you. It will only portray to you what actually exists. You will see, for one thing, what you have kind of missed, my dear Senator. ... No one has to see the picture; you understand that. A picture like *Underground* has a trailer... The trailer is from the picture and is practically the story that goes out to the theater, and no one has to go in to see it. No Nazi has to go in to see *Underground*. They don’t have to. We couldn’t make them believe anything.”

²² Ibid., 375. “I do not know what people would think; I can’t talk for the rest of the world. I think in America we have our own minds and we use them.”

film content.²³ They were not in the business of “making pictures to incite anyone to war. That [was] up to the people, the President, and Congress. [They were] making pictures of facts. That [was] the whole story in a nutshell.”²⁴ Warner, as both a representative of Warner Bros. Studio and an individual, argued that he bore no more sway on the attitudes of the American people than a Congressman who publicly professed his hatred for Nazism.

You will pardon me, but I am trying to see and to have you see the situation. Now, you say it is all a call on the frame of mind. You take it from the point of view that I, Harry Warner, head of a motion-picture company, hating nazi-ism (*sic*), will do everything in the world to incite the people against nazi-ism. You as a Senator and the chairman of this subcommittee are highly respected in this country and as such tend to mold public opinion, possibly more than our pictures, and you say that you hate nazi-ism. Now, isn't that a molding of the minds of the American people to incite them to war? ²⁵

Warner adamantly denied allegations of acts un-American. Warner Bros. Studios had always created films related to world affairs, but he insisted each film was carefully researched to ensure accuracy and great care was taken to create films that depicted the world as it was.²⁶ Warner asserted that the Committee's claim that the American people did not desire said films was ludicrous, *Sergeant York* alone was ranked movie of the year. Even Senator Nye had publicly praised the film as being “exceedingly good,”

²³ Ibid., 377. The Hays Office and the Production Code Administration were censorship offices tasked with the duty of ensuring the Hollywood adhered to a strict guideline in the production of films, which mandated the production of films for the sole purpose of entertainment.

²⁴ Ibid., 378.

²⁵ Ibid., 381. Warner directed his comment at the Senator Clark, committee chairperson. Clark rebutted Warner's comment by paraphrasing a Harrison's report on the film, *The Mortal Storm*. Movie-goers commented that they left the theater “sickened and trembling and in a nervous condition,” and “after seeing the picture...ready to fight a one-man battle against Hitler.” Personal opinion could not be compared to the manipulation families and their children are subjected to when “you begin to go to work on them with lights and color and sound.” Coincidentally, the film in question, *The Mortal Storm*, was produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM).

²⁶ Harry Warner testimony before the Senate, Governmental and Political Activity, folder 2947, 828, *WBA*. Nye made the comment following a private screening of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, sent to the New York Office on May 11, 1939. See also Propaganda, 340; Birdwell, 11.

believed that more films dealing with “propaganda emanating from foreign lands” should be produced, and that any democratic American would “appreciate this picture and feel a new allegiance to the democratic cause.”²⁷ Overall, Warner Bros. films were, in general, popular with the critics and general public alike. Lastly, Warner Bros. produced films without any orders or suggestions, direct or indirect, from the government.²⁸ The claims against Warner Bros. films constituted an affront to the purpose and direction the studio set for itself thirty-five years earlier: to enlighten, entertain, and educate.²⁹

Warner argued that the claims brought forth by the Subcommittee were “reckless and unfounded,” deliberately vague, and intended on creating confusion and damage in the public and private realms in an effort to satisfy the committee member’s deep-rooted hostilities and personal fears of the unknown. He insisted that the charges against him, his studio, and Hollywood at large, represented something sinister that bore little to no connection to the Subcommittee’s stated purpose of protecting the American public from propaganda aimed at inciting American involvement in another European conflict.

“The proof of the pudding,” Warner remarked to the members of the Subcommittee, “is in the eating.”³⁰ Hollywood was on trial because it was primarily under the influence and direction of Jews. Warner concluded that the hearings, or “pudding,” were nothing more than a witch-hunt against Jews fueled by anti-Semitism cloaked in the guise of

²⁷ Propaganda, 370.

²⁸ The US government had in fact reached out to Hollywood studios in the creation of propaganda films. Disney, for example, had been creating pro-War propaganda animation as early as summer, 1941—the result of both direct request of the US government and volunteering. Correspondence from Robert S. Carr to Leo C. Rosten, Regarding Disney Film for Canadian Government, Correspondence from Leo C. Rosten to Lowell Mellett, July 23, 1941, Letter from Walt Disney to members of the Aviation Film Committee, April 10, 1941, and Letter to Mellett from Rosten, March 12, 1941, Box 888, Records of the Office of Governmental Reports, Records of the Executive Division - Correspondence of the Director, 1936-43, Folder OWI-OGR, Leo Rosten 1940-42, *National Archives*.

²⁹ Propaganda, 342.

³⁰ Ibid., 340.

propriety. Time, Warner was certain, would reveal the true motivation behind the hearings, as well as the emphasis of its chosen targets. The committee excluded Hollywood Gentiles from the hearings and was composed of known isolationists and anti-Semites.

Despite his objections and assertions of innocence before the Subcommittee, however, Warner knew that the allegations were not unfounded. Warner's position as an ardent interventionist and Jew influenced the content and direction of the films discussed in the hearings. The Subcommittee failed to understand how assimilation, a powerful and neglected motive, influenced the production of Warner Bros. films. As early as 1933, the Warner brothers developed a calculated pro-war propaganda campaign, cloaked in pro-democratic anonymity, intended on influencing the American public's perception of American Jews, as well as war.

Through Warner Bros. Studio, the Warner brothers Harry, Albert, Sam, and Jack, created propaganda films that idealized U.S. democracy, focused on facts and true events and, after 1928, deliberately eliminated any connection to anti-Semitism or Judaism. This campaign served two purposes. First, it enabled Harry and Jack Warner to create films that focused on people and events they deemed essential, such as the Leo Frank case and threat of Hitler and the Nazis to humanity, while adhering to the guidelines set forth by the PCA. Second, pro-democratic and pro-American films and shorts were essential in the brothers' assimilation goal, masking any connection to Judaism while simultaneously expressing their loyalty to the U.S.

Motivated by bigotry and limited in their knowledge of Hollywood, the members of the Subcommittee were either unable or unwilling to see beyond their own preconceived

view of Hollywood and its Jewish moguls. They failed to comprehend the Jewish desire to assimilate as well as Jewish loyalty for America. For the brothers, war did not translate into greed, nor were they motivated by financial gains. Harry Warner firmly believed in the inevitability of war. The threat Nazism posed to U.S. values and democratic ideals made war inevitable. Nazism and the anti-Semitic growth it created beyond Germany's borders only helped to reinforce the brothers' drive to educate audiences about the dangers Nazism posed. This was achieved through the use of propaganda—unfunded, self-motivated, pro-American, propaganda of the Warner brother's own creation.

Focusing on the Warner brothers and their studios as a case study for the American Jewish experience, this dissertation argues that the brothers, through their studio, attempted to mold U.S. public opinion to achieve their private and political goals at home and abroad. At an early point in the studio's existence, the brothers, Jews of Eastern European descent, embarked in a calculated and deliberate campaign aimed at alleviating anti-Semitism and assimilating Jews into white, mainstream, U.S. society. Through the creation of an Americanization campaign of their own making, the brothers continuously bombarded U.S. movie goers with films and shorts centered on one or more of the following five themes: patriotism, Christian virtues, U.S. democratic ideals (which they considered to be tolerance, diversity, freedom, altruism, honesty, and unity), "acceptable" racism and, the white-washing of Warner Bros. characters and the Warner brothers themselves—the deliberate removal of Jewish characters and themes from their films and public personas.³¹ As Hitler's anti-Semitic message seeped into the American psyche

³¹ The term "Americanization" is not my own. Used interchangeably with assimilation, Americanization implies the adoption of American ideals, customs, and beliefs. Insofar as Warner Bros. is concerned, the

amplifying anti-Semitism, the brothers intensified and adjusted their Americanization campaign. *Sergeant York* and *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, for example, repeatedly implied that Nazism threatened American democratic values, rather than posing any threats to Jews.³² By doing so, the Warner brothers simultaneously perpetuated racist stereotypes, stressed patriotism, and created conditions that positively cast the Warner brothers, as individuals, and Jews by association, in the minds of mainstream American society. The brother's efforts contributed to Jewish evolution to white.

This dissertation's thesis is four-pronged. Firstly, pre-1933, Warner Bros. Studio created an Americanization campaign that highlighted democratic ideals and Jewish assimilation. Under the direction of Harry Warner, Warner Bros. produced films that discussed topics he, in particular, deemed most important and in need of intervention. These films highlighted social problems other studios skirted due to fear of loss of audience or criticism, such as "the Depression, crime, racism, religious intolerance, prostitution, southern chain gangs, drug abuse, and the mistreatment of [WWI] veterans," while stressing that "Americans must be responsible to their fellow man."³³ Focus on these themes made the Warner brothers an anomaly in Hollywood, outcasts within Hollywood's "Big Five," and targets for middle-class moral reformers and religious

term refers to creation of a new form defining of America, based on the six pillars of American Democratic ideals as determined by Harry Warner.

³² J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler (eds), *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies, and Broadcasting* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 50.

³³ Birdwell, 10. Although WB studios produced films that discussed discrimination, sex, war, and violence in a more frank manner than other major Hollywood studios, they also succumb to the social limitation of the period. These included the perpetuation of racialized imagery of both black and Jewish Americans and the myriad of limitations set forth by the Production Code Administration (PCA).

censorship committees that believed Hollywood's sole purpose was entertainment, not social criticism or change.³⁴

The ability to go in this direction was a direct consequence of the overwhelming success of the 1927 film *The Jazz Singer*. This film not only provided Hollywood a literal voice, its success gave Warner Bros. a platform and security, both financially and within the confines of Hollywood's elite, with which to thrust upon U.S. society issues, analyses, and perspectives the brothers deemed most significant. No longer limited to films that focused on pure entertainment, such as *The Adventures of Rin Tin Tin* (1918-1939) in which German Shepherd, Rinty, was the protagonist, the brothers could focus on the production of films that challenged social norms and highlighted topics deemed too taboo by other Hollywood studios. They criticized the limitations of U.S. democracy, supported Jewish assimilation, and highlighted the hatred associated with anti-Semitism.³⁵ Unlike the rest of Hollywood's moguls, Harry Warner in particular understood that films possessed an inherent power to influence U.S. culture and society, and utilized Warner Brother's Studio as a vehicle for change. Hollywood, Harry Warner argued, was "the nation's most important culture making industry."³⁶ As such, the brothers used films to achieve their personal, political, social, and financial goals. Their

³⁴ During the period referred to as the "Golden Age" of Hollywood, 1920–1960s, eight dominated the studio system. Of these, five were conglomerates that integrated production studio ownership, distribution, theater chain ownership, and the contracting of personnel and performers. The Big Five consisted of the following studios, Famous Players-Lasky Corporation (eventually known as Paramount), Fox Film Corporation, Loew's Inc. (eventually known as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, MGM), Warner Bros., and Radio-Keith Orpheum (RKO). Warner Bros. entered the ranks following the successful production of *The Jazz Singer* (1927), and the acquisition of hundreds of theaters in the 1928 purchase of the Stanley Company of America which included a temporary one-third ownership of First National Pictures (the entirety of First National Pictures would be acquired by the Warner Brothers' Corporation, Incorporated, by the end of the year).

³⁵ Birdwell, 12.

³⁶ Welky, 4.

Americanization campaign facilitated their achievements, helped to stress their devotion to the nation, and provided the framework for a transition into mainstream U.S. society for Jewish immigrant families.

Secondly, the brothers were divided in the manner and means by which Jewish assimilation was to be achieved. Pushed and pulled by personalities fundamentally at odds with one another, Warner Bros. films represented a new, modern America, as well as one rooted in the complexities of the American Jewish experience. Like the rest of the U.S. Jewish community at large, the brothers Warner disagreed about the definition of Americanism and how Judaism fit into it. They bypassed deeply rooted personal disagreements and personal convictions on assimilation and Judaism, however, to create the illusion of a united front in their battle to save democracy, in addition to growing and protecting their business, and protecting themselves from anti-radicals/anti-Semites and internal censorship offices. In the hope of attaining their mutual desire of belonging in white U.S. mainstream society, the brothers managed to ignore deep-rooted animosity and suspicion, and suspended personal hostilities, to “constru[e] themselves as one.”³⁷

In broad terms, the definition and means of assimilating into white U.S. culture divided American Jews, although it was generally agreed that assimilation was key to the desired transition into white mainstream society and ultimate security in their adopted homeland. Overall, the process of assimilating into white U.S. society fell into one of two categories. The first defined assimilation as the complete, or near complete, abandonment of Jewish traditions, values, culture, and religion. A linear interpretation of assimilation, proponents believed assimilation required fervent adherence to American cultures and ideals,

³⁷ Gabler, 131.

including the rejection of the needs and desires of the individual for the betterment of the majority. The second presented a more abstract definition of assimilation in which proponents argued that assimilation included the integration of Jewish tradition into American culture. While American culture would be adopted, it would represent an amalgam that included Judaism rather than the complete loss of Jewish culture and values—the two would simply co-exist. Co-mingling of values and ideals granted Jews the ability to practice their chosen religion freely as an expression of democratic values. Thus by maintaining and expressing ties with Judaism, Jews would acculturate into American culture.³⁸ These opposing positions caused a rift within the American Jewish community. The Warner brothers were not exempt; the former was represented by the two youngest brothers, Sam and Jack, the latter by the eldest, Harry and Albert.

Thirdly, Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany in 1933, combined with a pronounced increase of U.S. anti-Semitism, prompted the revamping of Warner's Americanization campaign. The revised campaign stressed the dangers of Nazism to the U.S., toned down Warner Bros. public or professional connection to Judaism through whitewashing (the deliberate integration of white characters, themes, and period-acceptable racial views, as well as the continued removal of Jewish characters and

³⁸ Not all historian's assessments agree on the assimilation model, others have argued that Jews acculturated into American culture, enabling the maintenance of their unique ethnic characteristics that made them Jews, while providing entrance into middle-class, white American society. For more on this see Albert Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1959); Arthur Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999); Marshall Sklare, *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958); Daniel Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Alan Silverstein's *Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1994); Alan Zuckerman and Calvin Goldscheider's *The Transformation of the Jews* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Calvin Goldscheider's *Jewish Continuity and Change: Emerging Patterns in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986); Gerard Sorin, *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); and Calvin Goldscheider and Sidney Goldstein's *Jewish Americans: Three Generations in a Jewish Community*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

imagery), and adopted greater racism toward Americas' enemies, particularly Japanese citizens. This not only altered Harry and Jack's partnership as brothers, it eliminated the visibility of the brothers as Jews, and helped transform Jews into white Americans.

The studio's transformation was not simple. Opposing views on assimilation in the midst of increasing anti-Semitism and unwanted attention pitted the brothers' dueling personalities into further turmoil. Harry Warner declared himself arbiter of peace and savior of democracy in the U.S., *the "celluloid soldier."*³⁹ As a result, Harry used Warner Bros. films to express his radical and anti-Fascist directives, an evolution to the brother's Americanization drive that prompted further deterioration in an already tentative relationship with his brother, Jack. Comparatively, Jack Warner believed that Harry's position against Nazism posed a threat to the company as well as the tenuous position of Jews in U.S. society. The divide reflected the schism present within the American Jewish community, a divide that further stressed the tentative position of Jews in the U.S. The questions emerged: Should Jews draw attention to themselves by openly fighting for intervention against the injustices committed against Jews in Nazi Germany, or refrain from public support for Jewish causes for fear of drawing attention to themselves as Jews in their adoptive home?⁴⁰ Should or could Nazism be combated by American Jews, if so, at what cost?

In an effort to pacify the increasing divide on assimilation, Warner Bros. Studio, as directed by Harry and Jack Warner, embraced a melding of these opposing views. The

³⁹ While Birdwell provided the Warner brothers with the title of "celluloid soldiers," this study makes clear that Harry Warner gravitated toward the position more easily and deliberately than Jack.

⁴⁰ Examples of "fight or flight" were not limited to injustices committed against Jews in Nazi Germany. On the contrary, the struggle to determine how a Jew should or should not act was reflected in events occurring in the United States. This included speaking up against slanderous claims, such as the anti-Semitic attacks by Henry Ford, as in the case of Aaron Sapiro libel case. See Victoria Saker Woeste, *Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle Against Hate Speech* (Stanford, CA: Stanford university Press, 2012).

Warner brothers' Americanization campaign sought to accomplish their mutual goal of assimilation and ultimate acceptance into white American society. As the company's president and primary representative, Harry Warner omitted his religious affiliation and personal beliefs from his public story, creating a public persona that openly stressed the importance patriotism and democracy, as well as the "beauty of Christianity" and its significance in the American experience, while privately and quietly continuing to adhere to the tenets of Judaism. Jack, on the other hand, continued to publicly flaunt a disdain for Judaism both publicly and privately, rejecting any connection to Judaism, and continuing to personify a caricature of the quintessential "American"—loud, boisterous, a showman. As part of the brothers' Americanization campaign, Jack adopted a public stance against Nazism and Fascism, stressing the dangers of Nazism to the U.S. in public speeches, in addition to joining anti-Nazi associations such as the Hollywood anti-Nazi League. The brothers used Warner Bros. films as vehicles for the active and frank, yet careful, discussion of Nazism, as they attempted to provoke an active dialogue of the meaning of Nazism to democracy and Jews within U.S. society.⁴¹ This coincided with the dissolution of Warner Bros. Studio financial and distributive ties with Germany and its supporters as early as 1934.

Fourthly, Jack and Harry's business relationship provided the means and permission to create films that ultimately aided in the war effort. Following the outbreak of war, Warner Bros. created propaganda films and shorts expressly at the request of the U.S. government. The Warner brothers' Americanization campaign bore special significance during the war period. The brothers' tactics, in particular, and Harry Warner's six pillars

⁴¹ Birdwell, 17-18, 19-20. The brother's decision to cut ties with Germany will be discussed further in chapter four.

of democratic ideals (tolerance, diversity, freedom, altruism, honesty, and unity), in specific, became models for Hollywood to follow at the request of the U.S. government via the Office of War Information (OWI).

Through the mediums of film and animation, and their collaboration with the U.S. government, the Warner brothers instigated a new social contract—one that helped associate Jews as white rather than an “other” in U.S. society. Harry and Jack Warner helped create, maintain, and meld two specific brands of propaganda by continuously reiterating the values and ideals of American society through patriotic imagery: pro-American and, through repeated and constant omission, acceptance toward Jews. The former aided the U.S. in the continued drive toward victory at home and abroad, the latter in the process of whitewashing of Jews and facilitating Jewish assimilation into white mainstream U.S. society. Both appealed to the national character. Warner Bros. films reaffirmed an idealized perception of the U.S. in which it played the role of liberator, arbiter for peace, justice, diversity, and equality—conveniently neglecting its own racist roots and tendencies. This newfound and open relationship between Hollywood and the United States government helped to develop a transitional period that redefined American Jewish identity.

This is a study of American Jewish identity. It analyzes the interplay of anti-Semitism in the U.S., Jewish assimilation, and incorporation into mainstream society. It will contribute to the debate on the creation and maintenance of American Jewish identity as well as the evolution of whiteness in U.S. history, particularly as anti-Semitism influenced the application of patriotism as a tool of assimilation. The study engages with several questions. How and why did Jews become categorized as “white” following

World War II? What role did the U.S. government play in sponsoring the Jewish transition and the creation of a new social contract to admit them into “white” America? And, how did the anti-Semitic sentiment of the period influence the maintenance, or breakdown, of American Jewish identity? In essence, would Jews be Jews in America or American Jews?

Historical inquiry on the connection between anti-Semitism and Jewish assimilation into white U.S. society developed in earnest during the twentieth century, despite earlier discussions within the study of U.S. immigration. Scholarly inquiry by historians, political scientists, sociologists, and film scholars have contributed to the study of anti-Semitism as part of American Jewish identity and the American Jewish experience.⁴²

Initially, historical consideration of anti-Semitism and its role within U.S. society was relegated to fringe groups, as the result of social and political changes, rather than as part of the consensus. As a whole, scholars considered anti-Semitism either insignificant to the American experience or denied it. Richard Hofstadter’s *The Age of Reform* (1955), for example, attributed the anti-Semitic rhetoric of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

⁴² For more on American assimilation see Alan Kraut, “A Century of Scholarship in American Immigration and Ethnic History,” in *A Century of American Historiography*, James M. Banner, ed (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010), 124; Albert E Stone, ed., *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America*. New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 1981. See also, Couvares, et al., “Immigration: American Assimilation or Transnational Race-Making?,” in *Interpretations of American History, vol. 2: From Reconstruction* (New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009), 128-129. Couvares continued, “Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and prosperities will one day cause great changes in the world.”; Titus Munson Coan, “A New Country,” *The Galaxy*, 0019, 4 (April, 1875): 462-472, 463; Israel Zangwill, *The Melting-Pot: Drama in Four Acts* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1911), 37. Explaining the “melting pot” theory Zangwill wrote, (as David, the lead, replies to Vera) “Not understand that America is God’s crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all races of Europe are melting and re-forming! Here you stand, good folk, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in tour fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won’t be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you’ve come to—these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians—into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American.” First published in 1908; Couvares, 130. Reprinted in *The Frontier in American History*, (New York, 1920), 22-23.

century to the Populist movement, instigated by backward individuals that did not adhere to the general mood and beliefs of the majority.⁴³ Similarly, John Higham's *Strangers in the Land* (1955) attributed U.S. anti-Semitism, as well as the rise in xenophobia and nativism, to the economic ebbs and flows influenced primarily by internal forces that caused perceived threats to the stability, or well being, of the nation.⁴⁴ Assimilation coincided with these trends as anti-immigrant regulations and groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the Immigration Act of 1924, challenged the position of immigrants and their ability to assimilate into U.S. society.

Historian Michael Dobkowski, however, challenged this view, stressing that far from being a limited or non-existent entity within U.S. society, anti-Semitism was ever-present, invasive, and well developed throughout U.S. history (even before any personal encounters with Jews ever transpired).⁴⁵ Utilizing nineteenth-century literature as the basis of his argument, anti-Semitism, Dobkowski concluded, developed largely from stereotypes directed or influenced primarily by Christian portrayals of Jews as "Christ killer." These beliefs were shaped and reinforced by what people saw, heard, and experienced.⁴⁶ The deep-rooted, misunderstood, and often unfounded, distrust and hatred of Jews in general was not relegated to the recesses of U.S. society as had been argued by Hofstadter, Handlin, or Higham. On the contrary, U.S. anti-Semitism was persistent and

⁴³ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955). See also Dobkowski, 6.

⁴⁴ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988). For more on economic influences on American anti-Semitism see David Gerber, *Anti-Semitism in American History* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

⁴⁵ Michael Dobkowski, *The Tarnished Dream: The Basis for American Anti-Semitism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 240. See also Lee J. Levinger, *Anti-Semitism in the United States: Its History and Causes* (New York, N.Y: Bloch Publishing Co., 1925). Levinger's Doctoral thesis highlights the importance of the group mentality in the development and maintenance of American anti-Semitism.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 9, 14, 189.

pervasive, permeating not only the literary sphere, but daily life of Jews and non-Jews alike— it was both “overt and articulate.”⁴⁷ As a result, U.S. anti-Semitism redefined American Jewish identity, driving Jews toward assimilation.

Influenced by Dobkowski’s call for serious historical inquiry on U.S. anti-Semitism, Leonard Dinnerstein’s *Anti-Semitism in America* (1994), confirmed the existence and pervasive nature of anti-Semitism.⁴⁸ Although Dinnerstein agreed with Dobkowski’s assessment of Christian teachings as the primary motivator for the persistent nature of anti-Semitism in America, Dinnerstein concluded that U.S. anti-Semitism was far less intrusive than its European counterpart. Dubbed “weak,” “polite,” as well as private and latent in nature, U.S. anti-Semitism were most prevalent in social and economic restrictions, rather than in overt or violent acts. As a result, Jews were willing to navigate the limitations and restraints imposed by American society because they paled in comparison to European restrictions. According to Dinnerstein, assimilation was of utmost importance to Jews who immigrated to the U.S. because the new nation represented a new beginning and economic opportunity. It represented permanence and the possibility of acceptance. The path to acceptance, however, was not linear, nor was it ever secure.

Jews experienced rapid socioeconomic success and improved social mobility. This success proved to be a hindrance as well as a blessing. Success in capitalistic endeavors, which included financial security, failed to guarantee Jews the coveted designation of

⁴⁷ Ibid, 6.

⁴⁸ Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1994). See also Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home*; See also Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter, a History*, (New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1989); and Michael Seller, ed., *Kike! A Documentary History of Anti-Semitism in America* (New York, NY: World Publishers, 1972). All have described American anti-Semitism as a weaker version of its European counterpart, using terms such as “polite,” or “discrete” when discussing it.

“white.”⁴⁹ Instead, Jews became identified as the perpetual “Other” in American society—neither white nor non-white, at times even referred to as “Oriental” or compared to blacks.⁵⁰ Jewish acceptability wavered following the arrival of the second wave of Jewish immigrants hailing from Eastern Europe during the 1880s. Established American Jewish society, other immigrant groups, as well as “white” Americans, were suspect of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, considering them as a threat to economic and social advancement. This was particularly poignant as Eastern European Jews became associated with radical tendencies.⁵¹ Furthermore, as the number of Jewish immigrants increased, so did their visibility, nativism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism.

“Whiteness” proved elusive. As the country struggled to make sense of changing landscapes carved by war(s), Jews faced overt forms of anti-Semitism from nativists, xenophobes, and middle-class reformers. Furthermore, established Jews were exposed as Jews, unable to differentiate themselves from their Eastern European counterparts.

⁴⁹ For more on Jewish social and economic mobility, see Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (New York, NY: Antheneum, 1981); see Nathan Glazer, “Is Assimilation Dead?” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 530, Intermorality Affairs in the U.S.: Pluralism at the Crossroads, (Nov., 1993): 122-136. Steinberg challenges the position of Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, and other theorists that have promoted the end of the America as a melting pot. Steinberg argues that culture in and of itself did not explain Jewish economic and social mobility, but rather the industrial skills that provided Jews advancement in America. See also Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italians and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1977); Eli Lederhendler, *Jewish Immigrants and American Capitalism, 1880-1920: From Caste to Class* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and John Higham, *Send These on to Me: Jews and other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York, NY: Antheneum, 1975); and Reuveni, Gideon and Nils H. Roemer, eds., *Longing, Belonging, and the Making of a Jewish Consumer Culture* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2010).

⁵⁰ Nathan C. Belth, *A Promise to Keep: A Narrative of the American Encounter with Anti-Semitism* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1981). See also E. L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2006); Leonard Rogonoff, “Is the Jew White? The Racial Place of the Southern Jew,” *American Jewish History*, 85, 3 (September, 1997), 195-230; and Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1880-1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000):

⁵¹ Sheldon Neuringer, *American Jewry and Unites States Immigration Policy, 1881-1953* (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1970). See also Arthur Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehlilah Experiment, 1908-1922* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1970).

The 1913 murder trial of Leo Frank eliminated the illusion of polite anti-Semitism. Frank, a Jewish manager of a Pencil Factory in Atlanta, GA, was charged with the crime of murdering a twelve-year-old girl, Mary Phagan, largely based on the accusations of a black janitor, Jim Conley. Tried, sentenced to death, and later commuted to a life sentence for the alleged crime, Frank was subsequently lynched by a mob that viewed his death as fit retribution for the life of Phagan. For U.S. Jews, however, the Frank case stressed the precarious position of Jews in American society, as well as the delicate balance they would have to negotiate to assimilate into it. As Leonard Dinnerstein stressed in the first historical assessment of the Frank case, *The Leo Frank Case* (1968), the case was significant in that it highlighted, for the first time, the extent to which collective animosities toward Jews could reach, turning “polite” anti-Semitism violent, as Jews became targets simply for being Jews. The case forced American Jews to accept the existence of violence associated with U.S. anti-Semitism and the need for awareness and potential self-defense in their adoptive homeland.⁵²

Dinnerstein determined that Frank was found guilty as a result of popular hysteria and tainted evidence concocted from the start of the investigation. Anti-Semitism propelled the case against Frank, negated any other possible alternatives, and ultimately resulted in his death. Dinnerstein concluded that the level of anti-Semitism associated with Frank’s arrest and lynching was instrumental in the development, or re-establishment, of key

⁵² Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (Athens, GA: Georgia University Press, 2008). Originally published in 1968. The issue of self-defense would become pivotal as the United States found itself inching toward a second European war. once acutely aware of the extent to which American anti-Semitism could reach, divided Jews into two main camps—those that chose to accept their Jewish roots, regardless of their personal connection to them, and those that chose to cloak their Jewishness for fear of loss of status, and possible acceptance within white American society.

associations and groups that not only stressed anti-Semitic sentiment, such as the KKK, but also those that demanded protection from it, such as the Anti-Defamation League.

Other assessments of the Frank case and its effect on Jews, such as Susan Tift and Alex Jones's *The Trust* (2000) stressed that Jews who spoke up for Frank found themselves under constant harassment, scrutiny, and at times in physical and psychological fear of being exposed as a Jew.⁵³ Initially, a limited number of wealthy and established Jews of German origin became activists for Frank, stressing anti-Semitism as motivation for Frank's arrest. In an effort to protect Frank they sought the assistance of other prominent and wealthy Jews, such as *New York Times* owner Adolph Ochs, whose involvement they presumed could spark interest and outrage from Americans, Jews and non-Jews alike.⁵⁴ Those who helped suffered swift and hateful retribution from anti-Semites, xenophobes, and nativists throughout the country. The result of the increase in overt and violent anti-Semitism divided the Jewish community on how best to respond to their changing environment. This division influenced the manner in which U.S. Jews would choose to act and react to subsequent public Jewish causes, such as the plight of German and European Jews following the rise of the Adolph Hitler in 1933.⁵⁵

⁵³ Susan E. Tift and Alex S. Jones, *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family behind The New York Times* (New York, NY: Back Bay Books, 2000). See also Steven Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History Up To World War II*, (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 40-41.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ For more on this schism, see Woeste. While Woeste's study focused Henry Ford's attacks on American Jews, the division between American Jews on how to combat Ford's public anti-Semitic rants are central to understanding the aforementioned schism on assimilation. It is also significant in understanding how and why Jews reacted to the persecution of Jews in Germany and Europe, ultimately resulting the Holocaust. Two Jews are central to her study: Louis Marshall, a leading Jewish American lawyer, and Aaron Sapiro, Jewish American lawyer, corporate activist, and leader in the farmer's movement. While Sapiro actively opposed Ford's attacks on his character and viewed activism against Ford as an extension of his American right and duty as a Jew and American, Marshall believed that ignoring Ford's verbal and written attacks would prove more fruitful in attaining acceptance in mainstream American society.

Furthermore, the Frank case rejuvenated stereotypes that often associated Jews with blacks, particularly those focused on overt sexual prowess and promiscuity.⁵⁶ Jeffrey Melnick's *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial* (2000) argued that sexuality, and its relationship to race and ethnicity, was a key tactic utilized by Frank's defense. Frank's lawyers drew on pre-existing and well established stereotypes of black males as rapists to redirect attention to, and differentiate Frank from, his accuser, Jim Conley. This tactic was particularly significant for Frank, as well as other Southern Jews, since they were acutely aware that acceptance in white Southern society demanded clear and deliberate differentiation between Jews and blacks.⁵⁷ While Melnick does not negate the anti-Semitic foundation of the Frank case, he argued that many Southerners viewed the alleged sexual assault as more than a violation of Mary Phagan's body. To many it symbolized an extension of Northern aggression and control in the South. As Clive Webb succinctly summarized, "fear of the capitalistic entrepreneur fused with social prejudice against the Jew ... form[ed] a nightmarish image of Frank as an uncontrollable sexual pervert who preyed on unsuspecting girls such as the murdered Mary Phagan."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Jeffrey Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2000). For more on Black/Jewish relations see Maurianna Adams and John Brace, eds., *Strangers and Neighbors: Relations Between Blacks and Jews in the United States* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000); Has Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915-1935* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Jeffrey Gurock, *When Harlem was Jewish, 1870-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); and Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁵⁷ Pitting ethnicity and race against each other, Melnick argued, was instrumental in the development of an intense conflict between the two groups—Jews and Blacks—challenging the argument that the case created relationship between oppressed minorities yielding a powerful coalition between the two groups.

⁵⁸ Clive Webb, "Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South by Jeffrey Melnick," *The Journal of American History*, 89, 1 (June 2002), 258. For more on the relationship between the Frank case and sexuality, see Nancy MacLean, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism," *The Journal of American History*, 78, 3 (Dec. 1991), 917-948.

The interaction between sexual appetite, anti-Semitism, racial comparisons, and assimilation is most pronounced in historical studies of Hollywood Jews. Unlike other areas in which Jewish entrepreneurship flourished, Hollywood was viewed as a “Jewish invention” and thus its Jewish members experienced a greater degree of difficulty disassociating from the designation of “Jew.”⁵⁹ As Steven Carr argued in *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism* (2001), Jewish success in Hollywood helped to reinforce deep-rooted anti-Semitic sentiments as well as the designation of Jews as “Other” in U.S. society. The combination often demanded the adoption of overt tactics of assimilation, as is noted by the Warner brothers, in an effort prove devotion to their adopted homeland.

As Hollywood entered the mainstream, Jewish influence over American culture became even more suspect.⁶⁰ Suspicion originated with Jews’ parlay into the theater and arts in the early nineteenth century, which was accompanied by racist imagery of “Jewish” physiognomy (exaggerated noses, hair, dress or overall “beastlike” appearance) and stereotypes which depicted Jews’ as Shylock (money handlers) as well as a “sexualized other” that menaced America’s moral fiber through the degradation of public morals and taste.⁶¹ This was pronounced by allegations that white girls found themselves at the mercy of Jewish males’ sexual appetites as a means of attaining their goals of becoming actros. Jews were charged with the corruption of American culture and morals from within—the “Trojan horse” of outsiders—attempting to enter white mainstream U.S. society through the guise of acceptability with the ultimate goal of “amassing great

⁵⁹ Some areas in which American Jews attained financial and entrepreneurial success include the textile industry, media, and finances.

⁶⁰ Gerber, 26, 44.

⁶¹ Carr, 14, 41, 42. Carr summarized that this imagery served dual purposes: “First, it emphasized the sexual threat of the racialized Jewish Other. Second, it became a metaphor for what Jews allegedly did to culture, ravaging it racially as they ravaged the body corporally.

power and special privileges" through the bastardization of virtue, culture, and morals.⁶² The result was the development of what Carr has dubbed the "Hollywood Question," which questioned Jewish influence in Hollywood, American culture and society, in addition to how Jews interpreted themselves as Jews. As Carr explained, "instead of overtly asking whether Jews [could] participate in the regular affairs of daily life, the Hollywood question asks whether Jews, given their quasi-racialized difference, should participate in the regular affairs of mediated life."⁶³ Thus, according to Carr, Jews would and could only be viewed as outsiders and "Others" despite their achievements and successes within American cultural endeavors such as Hollywood.

Other studies such as J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler's *Entertaining America* (1994) counter Carr, arguing that Jewish identity was in flux with that of other undesirables of the period, particularly, blacks and those that fit within the generic title of "Oriental."⁶⁴ As cultural stereotypes that crossed ethnic, racial, and generational barriers victimized Jews, white American society wavered between exclusion and admiration for the idealized representation of American culture created by Hollywood Jews. The combination of anti-Semitism and "Othering" yielded an intense drive toward assimilation by Hollywood Jews. As Neal Gabler stressed in *An Empire of their Own* (1988), "the grand theme of Hollywood, both in terms of films and in terms of the lives of its moguls, [was] idealized assimilation."⁶⁵ Hollywood Jews were completely devoted

⁶² Ibid., 3-4. Carr refers to Native Americans and African Americans as traditional non-whites that were effectively kept outside the boundaries of white-American society—the perpetual other, brutal, violent, savage and uncivilized.

⁶³ Ibid., 10. According to Carr, white Protestant Americans were at the forefront of the anti-Semitic "Hollywood Question."

⁶⁴ Hoberman and Shandler, 50.

⁶⁵ Eric Goldman, *The American Jewish Story Through Cinema*. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2013), 1.

to America—“ferocious, even pathological” in their “embrace for America and their complete and total rejection of their past.”⁶⁶

Michael Rogin’s *Blackface, White Noise* (1996), argued that in an effort to prove their devotion Hollywood Jews perfected an assimilation tactic that simultaneously helped to perpetuate the racist imagery and segregation of blacks, while alleviating themselves of any associations or comparison to the racist black image.⁶⁷ Through the use of blackface minstrelsy, Hollywood Jews achieved several significant and desired goals. First, Jews essentially distanced themselves from the ethnic and racial stereotypes that had plagued their attempts at assimilation by presenting themselves as more white and less black—not Jews, not others, but Americans. Second, by transforming themselves into blacks through the use of blackface, Hollywood Jews thwarted anti-Semitic attacks through the deliberate elimination of Jewish imagery and personhood in films. Lastly, through blackface, Jews “Americanized” by perpetuating the racist norms of white American society—racism provided few, if any, alternatives.⁶⁸

Historians and political scientists have argued that Jews played a role in creating and maintaining their positions as “Others.” Lester Friedman’s *Hollywood’s Image of the Jew* (1982) argued that Jewish studio owners deliberately altered, marginalized, minimized, or omitted, Jewish images on screen in an effort to assimilate and redirect undesired

⁶⁶ Gabler, 4. As Neal Gabler mentions in *An Empire of Their Own*, the Warner’s integration into American culture began with the patriarch’s adoption of the name Warner. Gabler argues that, by rejecting his given surname, Benjamin rejected his past for the prospects of a future in his adopted home.

⁶⁷ Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

⁶⁸ Sociologists, historians, political scientists, as well as film scholars have all taken part in the cataloging of Hollywood’s racial discrepancies towards blacks, few taking note on Jew’s motivation in their creation. See Christopher P. Lehman, *The Colored Cartoons: Black Representations in American Animated Short Films, 1907-1954* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007),

attention from anti-Semites, Congress, isolationists, as we as moral reformers.⁶⁹ Jews deliberately became “Others” at the hands of Jews. In comparison to Gentiles, Jews were depicted as exotic characters ambivalent about American culture, assimilationists, unidentifiable or invisible members of cast and crew, or hyphenated Americans separated from the rest of U.S. society. As creators of American culture, Jews simultaneously ensured their survival within, and omission from, America society by redirecting attention, both negative and positive, from themselves. This was significant as America braced itself to enter another European conflict. Beyond this, films, Eric Goldman stressed in *The American Jewish Story Through Cinema* (2013), provide an intimate look at the American Jewish experience, identity, and culture. To obtain a complete assessment of the U.S. Jewish experience, Goldman argued for closer inspection of visual and thematic representations, and deliberate omissions.⁷⁰ Until the end of the twentieth century, two themes persist within Jewish films—desire for assimilation, and the conflicts that seeking it brought.⁷¹

As America braced itself for the impending entrance into World War II, U.S. Jews experienced renewed scrutiny by America’s non-Jewish communities. Historians have

⁶⁹ Lester D. Friedman, *Hollywood’s Image of the Jew* (New York, N.Y.: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982).

⁷⁰ See Patricia Erens, *The Jew in American Cinema*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985). Both studies are limited by their attempt to read the films and/or tell the story of the American Jewish experience without delving into the historical nuances of the American Jewish experience. This includes the divisions between American Jews, assumes that all Jews desired assimilation, as well as failing to take into account generational shifts. See also Nathan Abrams, *The New Jew in Film: Exploring Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Cinema* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2012). Goldman expands on Nathan Abram’s *The New Jew In Film* which argued that the 1990s were a watershed for Jews in films as Jewish representations of self and their position in America were transformed in the formula of Jewish assimilation to depict the rise of Jewish agency. Due largely to a decline in overt anti-Semitism, Jews in film shed their agentless cloak of anonymity adopting instead pride and self-confidence as Jews. In many ways, Jews became normative—part of the multicultural and multiethnic fabric of American society—flawed, sexualized, multifaceted.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

marked this period as controversial for U.S. Jews. Jews had to contend with the realities of increasing and public acts of anti-Semitism, additional allegations as war mongers, as well as being viewed as manipulators attempting to draw the U.S. into another European conflict for personal gains and loyalties to their European brethren. Focusing on Hollywood's Jewish moguls, Ben Urwand's *The Collaboration* (2013), argued that greed prompted an active and willing collaboration between Hollywood Jews and Hitler's Third Reich.⁷² Hollywood's purported collaboration occurred between 1933 and 1939, through the active removal of anti-Nazi themes and Jewish characters, and the creation of what Urwand referred to as "propaganda" newsreels for Germany. Urwand, however, failed to take into account cultural, political, and social issues that restricted Hollywood's artistic integrity, points stressed in Thomas Doherty's *Hollywood and Hitler* (2013), Steven Carr's *Anti-Semitism and Hollywood*, Neal Gabler's *An Empire of Their Own*, J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler's *Entertaining America*, Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black's *Hollywood Goes to War* (1987), as well as David Welky's *The Moguls and the Dictators* (2008).⁷³

Scholarly consensus on Hollywood's Jewish moguls' actions, particularly the removal of Jews and Jewish themes from the screen, as well as the elimination of films with anti-Nazi themes, shows the influence of a combination of factors. These included, but not limited to: regulatory restrictions enforced by government official Joseph Breen

⁷² Ben Urwand, *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact with Hitler* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). It is important to point out that Urwand's work has been scrutinized for failing to understand Hollywood, let alone use available archival material in Hollywood. The basis of his argument is a photo, taken in 1945, depicting a visit by Jewish studio owners to Germany, and the creation of newsreels for Germany that were later edited and neutralized to show to the American public.

⁷³ Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood and Hitler, 1933-1939* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013); Hoberman and Shandler; Clayton Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped WWII Movies* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1987); and Welky.

and the PCA, personal and deliberate attempts by Jewish moguls to deflect attention from any association to Judaism, as well as the pulls of profit and distribution. Gabler expanded on this and argued that governmental intervention, through strong suggestion, played a key role in what Hollywood produced. In 1940, United States Ambassador to England, Joseph P. Kennedy approached Hollywood Jews urging an end to the production on anti-Nazi films. Kennedy argued that ending anti-Nazi productions secured personal and communal protection.⁷⁴ By doing so, Kennedy stressed, when the U.S. entered the war, Hollywood Jews would not be targeted as warmongers. Furthermore, U.S. intervention *would not* be perceived as a Jewish cause. Not all moguls adhered or accepted these limitations.

Further contradicting Urwand's assertions of Hollywood's treachery during WWII, the aforementioned studies provide supplementary evidence that one studio in specific failed to adhere to the suggestions of the U.S. government or the PCA: Warner Bros. Studio, Inc. Acting through its president and head of production, Harry and Jack Warner, Warner Bros. Studio actively, deliberately, and cunningly circumvented Hollywood's imposed limitations to produce films that combated Nazism, as argued in Michael Birdwell's *Celluloid Soldiers* (1999), Nick Roddick's *A New Deal in Entertainment*

⁷⁴ Gabler, 344. US government intervention did not mean that it sympathized with the Jewish plight abroad or its implications at home. On the contrary, anti-Semitism was as much a problem within the US government as it was outside of it. For more on this, see Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York, NY: Random House, 1968); David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York, NY: Pantheon Press, 1984) and *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968); and Theodore S. Hamerow, *Why We Watched, Europe, America, and the Holocaust* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008); Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston, MA: Little and Brown, 1999); Alan M. Kraut and Richard Breitman, eds., *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).

(1983), and David Thomson's *Warner Bros.* (2017).⁷⁵ Risking their reputation and financial security, the brothers embarked in a campaign focused on informing the U.S. public of the threat posed by Hitler and Nazis at home and abroad.

Through films produced between 1933-1940, such as *Sergeant York* and *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, the brothers attempted to influence America to adopt their interventionist, anti-Nazi leanings through the calculated use of patriotism. Significantly, the films produced during this period were covert to their intended goal. *Sergeant York*, for example, never discussed Nazism, Jews, or depicted any theme that could be linked directly to the European conflict—except, one could argue, war. On the contrary, the film focused on the courage of an American soldier during World War I, Alvin York—his sacrifices, triumphs, and patriotism.

Like other studies on Hollywood in during the 1930s-1940s, Birdwell concludes his study with the 1941 Senate Sub-Committee Hearings on Hollywood, which charged Hollywood's Jewish moguls with the creation of monopolies and warmongering. Coinciding with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Senate Hearings concluded without any resolution as Hollywood was actively and publicly sought by the U.S. government to create propaganda films as part of the war effort.⁷⁶ War was no longer an abstract, but a

⁷⁵ Birdwell; Nick Roddick, *A New Deal In Entertainment: Warner Brothers in the 1930s* (London: British Film Institute, 1983); David Thompson, *Warner Bros.: The Making of an American Movie Studio* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017). Volumes have been written on the topic of the Warner Bros. Most, however, have focused on the brothers as part of the studio system, rather than as individuals. As a result, when the brothers are discussed, they are relegated to secondary figures, second to their films. Those that do discuss the brothers limit their scope to biographical interests. Significant works written by Jack L. Warner and Cass Warner-Sperling are also not without flaws. Jack Warner, for example, re-wrote history in an effort to eliminate his family, giving himself top billing in all matters related to the studio. One should use caution using his autobiography, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood* as any thing other than pro-Jack propaganda. Cass Warner-Sperling and Cork Millner's, *Hollywood be Thy Name: The Warner Brother's Story* (Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing, 1994), shares similar flaws.

⁷⁶ Mark Harris' *Five Came Back: A Story of Hollywood and the Second World War* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2014) is the exception the direct discussion of the role of Hollywood's activism during

reality. The battle between isolation and intervention dissolved and preparedness became the U.S. government's priority. Both the Roosevelt administration and the Sub-Committee targeted Warner Bros. Studios for their propaganda techniques, yet studies fall short of discussing the implications of the Warner brothers' activism on both Hollywood and American Jews leading up to WWII. This is this gap that I wish to explore.

World War II proved a watershed event for Jewish history and Jewish identity in the United States and beyond. The horrors of the Holocaust, its causes and aftermath, and America's unwillingness, or inability, to admit its role in perpetuating anti-Semitism played a large role in its significance.⁷⁷ In the U.S., however, this period proved pivotal in the American Jewish transition between acceptance and denial of the realities of anti-Semitism. The war period illuminated the extreme nature and capabilities of hate; it pushed anti-Semitism to the fringes of society and prompted a renewed tolerance for religious and cultural pluralism.⁷⁸ This shift ushered a transition period for American Jews in which they became both Americans and Jews—fighting in various branches of the armed forces, participating in the war effort, working in Roosevelt's cabinet, and

WWII. However, emphasis is placed on directors and producers—Frank Capra, John Ford, George Stevens, William Wyler, and John Huston— of which only one, Wyler, was Jewish. Other studies such as Michael S. Shull and David E Wilt's *Doing their Bit: Wartime American Animated Shorts, 1939-1945* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1987) focuses on the content of the animated shorts, rather than the creators or the activism that preceded it. Others simply focus on the racialized content of animated shorts of the period, all the while neglecting the possible reasons or motivation for their content.

⁷⁷ America's introspection social introspection toward Jews and anti-Semitism, sadly did not yet incorporate its brutal and discriminatory racial policies toward African Americans and other minority groups.

⁷⁸ It should be noted that anti-Semitism was not eliminated from the American landscape, its advocates simply found new euphemisms to discriminate against Jews. For example, Hollywood Jews were not being targeted as Interventionist, but Communists as America began to target its "enemies" during the Second Red Scare.

participating in public life as Jews.⁷⁹ Acceptance into white society, however, was not guaranteed, secure, nor without great personal costs, but it appeared possible in ways that it had never been before.⁸⁰ This dissertation deepens historical understandings of the manner in which American Jews, limited and influenced by their social designation of “Other,” a desire for assimilation, and repeatedly stalled by deep-rooted discrimination, traversed the political and social landscapes to emerge as members of white American society.

This dissertation is organized into three chapters and a conclusion, each of which will center on identity as its main conceptual framework with special emphasis on the American Jewish experience, utilizing the Warner brothers as its central unifying element. How Jews defined themselves in America is of primary interest, as are the ways in which race, religion, and prejudicial attitudes helped shape Jewish personal identity. Anti-Semitism played an important role in defining Judaism in general terms, as well as dictating and restricting the means by which Jews felt comfortable in owning, accepting, or rejecting their Judaism. For better or for worse, the two worked in tandem and were fluid—as anti-Semitism increased, it forced Jews to question and redefine themselves.

In order to show that anti-Semitism influenced Jewish identity and vice versa, it is necessary to assess how the Warner brothers, as Jews, viewed themselves as Americans, and how they accommodated themselves to the ebbs and flows of anti-Semitism in the U.S. It is equally important to provide an active discussion of key events that shaped Hollywood and ultimately placed Warner Bros. Studio in the position as “the only studio

⁷⁹ See Deborah Dash Moore, *G.I. Jews: How World War II Changed A Generation* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard, 2004).

⁸⁰ See Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says About Race in America*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998); and Gordon, *Jews*.

with guts.”⁸¹ This background is pivotal in understanding the divisions between the Warner brothers as individuals, and the U.S. Jewish community as a whole. It is of further significance in understanding how and why Warner Bros. Studios embarked on their Americanization campaign.

Chapter One will provide a discussion of the manner in which assimilation influenced Warner Bros. films between 1918-1928. During this period, the brothers embarked in the first phase of an unofficial patriotic campaign, testing America’s response to socio-political commentary. Warner Bros. films melded opposing views of assimilation and patriotism in accentuating their desire for assimilation.

This chapter will include an assessment of the Warner brothers as individuals and professionals, with special focus on the two brothers that would come to represent Warner Bros. Studio, Harry and Jack Warner. This includes an in-depth assessment of their schism with special emphasis on their views on Judaism and assimilation and the manner in which they attempted to reconcile their differences.⁸² As primary representatives, their divergent personalities will be investigated and assessed with the intent of understanding how the brothers, despite being at odds on personal and professional ideals, created a studio that revolutionized Hollywood and helped transform the American Jewish condition and integration into mainstream U.S. society.

This chapter will further provide a discussion of the influence, and evolution, of U.S. anti-Semitic sentiment, its impact on the first “Red Scare,” the position of Hollywood

⁸¹ Groucho Marx on Warner Bros. Studios, quoted in Hoberman and Shandler, 63.

⁸² Due to Sam’s early death in 1927 and Albert’s intense privacy, special emphasis will be placed on the dynamics between Harry and Jack.

within U.S. society, the blowback it received as a “Jewish invention,” and the influence of anti-Semitism on assimilation and production directives.

The chapter will conclude with a discussion on *The Jazz Singer* (1927). The film is significant in Warner Bros. Studio transition from industry outcast, a “Poverty Row” studio, to member in Hollywood’s “Big Five.” In producing a blatantly Jewish film, the brothers illuminated the Jewish condition of the period, which stressed the struggle between adhering to the past while evolving with the present.

Chapter Two will provide a discussion of the manner in which assimilation influenced Warner Bros. films between 1929 and 1932. During this period, the brothers embarked in the second phase of their Americanization campaign in which, Warner Bros. films challenged the definition of an American and the limitation of assimilation. During this phase of the brothers produced films that both preached patriotism and criticized the limitations of U.S. democratic ideals—redefining America by creating an inclusive, tolerant society, bolstering the brother’s goals of assimilation.

The chapter will provide background to the influence of success on the diverging definitions of assimilation, the impact of anti-Semitism and sound on Hollywood, and development of the morality codes of the Golden Age of Hollywood—their purpose, motivation, and overall implications to Hollywood studios and films in general. These codes will include, but will not be limited to, those created and enforced by the MPPDA and PCA. This background is essential in understanding the evolution of Warner Bros. socio-political commentary, and the influence of regulation, anti-Semitism, and society in its creation.

Chapter Three will present an assessment of the impact of anti-Semitism, fascism, and political upheaval in the third phase of the brothers' Americanization campaign. From 1933 to 1941 the brothers stopped criticizing U.S. democratic ideas, redirecting their efforts to saving democracy. Through a selection of Warner Bros. films from this period, this chapter will explore the means by which the Warner brothers melded Harry's celluloid activism against Nazism and the brother's diverging definitions of assimilation to create a powerhouse studio intent on saving U.S. democracy at any cost.

This chapter will conclude with a brief assessment of the fourth phase of the brother's Americanization campaign, winning the hearts and minds of Americans during war. Between 1942 and 1945 Warner Bros. Studio created overt and racist propaganda aimed at adhering to mainstream beliefs and political ideals in their quest for acceptance. This included the racist portrayal of America's enemies in films and animation. Animated shorts and feature films of the war period helped to redirect, or minimize, anti-Semitism. The influence of U.S. government in this process will also be examined and summarized. This chapter will reiterate the argument that the collaboration between Jews in Hollywood and the United States government helped to transition Jews into mainstream U.S. society. Furthermore, the success of this relationship created a platform in which the U.S. government reinforced pro-military, pro-government, pro-war ideals while simultaneously encouraging Jewish integration, accentuating patriotism and democracy and transforming American culture.

Finally, the conclusion is intended as a discussion of the transition of Jews into mainstream America following the Allied victory in WWII. This will include and assessment of the fifth and final phase of the brother's Americanization campaign, as

well as a brief summary of significance of the Holocaust, U.S. anti-communist crusades in Hollywood, as well as a general push toward assimilation by American Jews.

The Warner brothers played a significant role in transitioning American Jews to white by highlighting the patriotic fervor of American Jews. The Jewish integration into “white,” however, has been far from linear. Constant and costly negotiations with the self, as well as societal forces, have created the conditions in which Jews have been accepted, rejected, and later accepted, although not embraced, within mainstream American society. Anti-Semitism persists. Many had the courage to fight it when fear stunted most. Those that are known should be discussed, the Warner brothers included. As Jews and Americans, they were instrumental in illuminating the threat of Nazism to the United States. They helped to define what it means to be American, and a Jew. The brothers were an anomaly within Hollywood. Their studio a microcosm of the American Jewish experience. Their activism needs further exploration, expansion, and definition. This dissertation seeks to address those gaps.

Chapter Two

“You Ain’t Heard Nothing Yet!”—The Warner Brothers, Assimilation, and the Development of Celluloid “Americanization.”

“There are too many thinkers, writers and speakers in the United States; from now on we need the doers, the organizers, and the realists who alone can win this contest for us, for democracy and for the permanent peace!” - James W. Gerard⁸³

Warner Bros. Studios was a family business. From patriarch Benjamin’s sale of the family horse and heirloom watch to secure the purchase of a film projector and film, *The Great Train Robbery*, to sister Rose playing the organ accompaniment, the Warner family played an integral role in the company’s success during its formative years.⁸⁴

There was nothing extraordinary about the four Warner brothers as individuals: Harry, Abe, Sam, and Jack. As a collective, however, they were an anomaly within Hollywood—a company run by brothers, frugal, fearless, and trusting of no one except themselves. Often described as “clannish,” they were seldom interested in producing films purely for entertainment. Instead, the brothers produced films that they wanted to see, covering topics that they wished to discuss on a public forum. The brothers intended their films to educate as much as to entertain.

Divided by ideological versions of Americanism and the consequential role of Judaism as Americans, the brothers were constantly at odds with one another. Motivated by anti-Semitism and the desire for acceptance into white mainstream (Anglo-Saxon) American society, the brothers vehemently disagreed on the role of Judaism in

⁸³ James W. Gerard, *My Four Years in Germany*, (gutenberg.org Ebook), 2005, Foreword.

⁸⁴ Thomson, 37-38; Warner-Sperling, 9:46. The brothers were four of twelve children. Beyond Rose’s involvement in the early years of the brothers venture into the film industry, little is known of the remaining siblings.

assimilation. Although all four brothers chose an ideological position, the schism was most prominent between the eldest and youngest brothers, Harry and Jack respectively. Eldest brothers, Harry and Abe, who had a deeper connection with their Judaic roots and faith, believed Judaism and U.S. democratic ideals coincided; indeed, supported one another. Youngest and most assimilated brothers, Sam and Jack, on the other hand, believing Judaism and the ideals of Americanism conflicted, rejected Judaism. These conflicting beliefs about Judaism, Americanism, and assimilation served as the catalyst for Harry and Jack's life-long disdain for one another, despite their mutual desire for assimilation.

Whereas their differences operated as a barrier in their personal relationships, professionally, the brothers used their tensions and hostility towards each other to create films that expressed a well-rounded representation of the American experience. During the first phase of the brothers' Americanization campaign, 1918-1928, Warner Bros. films transformed conflicting ideologies into films that rattled Hollywood's "for entertainment only" motto, deliberately discussing taboo topics such as discrimination, racism, sex, and religion. The brothers' decision to produce *The Jazz Singer*, a blatantly Jewish film that focused on the American-Jewish struggle for assimilation that resolved with an inter-faith relationship and acceptance, exemplified this amalgam.⁸⁵

Through *The Jazz Singer*, the brothers provided an artistic rendition of the American Jewish identity struggle. The public's embrace of the film provided Warner Bros. Studios the financial security and professional standing to embark in its own brand of celluloid activism focused on illuminating social injustice and wrongs. Through Warner Bros.

⁸⁵ *The Jazz Singer*, directed by Alan Crosland (1927; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio).

Studios, the brothers alleviated their familial factions in their drive to create an idealized version of America.

* * * * *

There were four brothers within the Warner Bros. studio empire—Harry, Albert, Jack, and Sam, Four in a tight-knit family of twelve; the brothers were raised by devout Jews, Polish immigrants Benjamin and Pearl, and flanked by sisters Anna, Rose, and brother Milton.⁸⁶ Each brother possessed individual qualities that enabled Warner Bros. Studio to reach the status of Hollywood royalty and cinematic infamy. Each depended on the other to ensure the company's security and success. Lacking any experience within the film/entertainment industry, the brothers seemed destined for failure. Mostly uneducated, the brothers' employment history included a series of odd jobs that spanned the family's initial cobbling business, selling newspapers, snake charming, and selling soap door to door. Often, the family's ability to eat depended on their ability to earn two dollars a day. The task of securing money for his family, Harry Warner reminisced, "was the greatest lesson of my life. Learn[ing] to work and appreciate work."⁸⁷

The brothers' entrance into the film industry was the result of serendipitous, if not unintentional, events in which three brothers' infatuation with nickelodeons (and the constant influx of patrons) propelled their imaginations toward the financial possibilities of moving pictures. The fourth brother, Jack, gravitated toward film as an afterthought,

⁸⁶ See Doug Sinclair, "Early Records for the "Warner Brothers" Family. Retrieved April 18, 2020. Available online at <http://doug Sinclair's archives.com/benjaminwarnerfamily.htm#1>. The Warner family arrived in the U.S. in stages. Benjamin arrived first in 1884, establishing a cobbler shop in Baltimore, Maryland, earning money to send for remaining member of the "Warner" family in 1889. With the exception of Jack and Milton, the rest of the surviving Warner siblings (Anna, 1879; Harry, 1881; Albert, 1884; Sam, 1887; and Rose, 1889) were born in Poland. Jack was born in London, Ontario (1892) and Milton in Baltimore, Maryland (1896).

⁸⁷ Harry Warner quoted in *The Brothers Warner*, directed by Cass Warner-Sperling (2008; Los Angeles, CA: Warner Sister Productions, Documentary), 8:40.

viewing it as an outlet for expressing himself and his ego. Of the four, Harry's influence secured Warner Bros. studios success, dictated its legacy, and revolutionized Hollywood's purpose. Youngest brother Jack secured the family's demise and company's deterioration. Although Sam is often credited as the catalyst for the brothers' venture into film, Harry and Jack, president and vice president, became the two most central figures within the Warner Bros. Studio empire.⁸⁸

Few similarities existed between Harry and Jack Warner. Eleven years Jack's senior, Harry was one of two Warner brothers privileged to a strictly Jewish upbringing, which he both desired and embraced: but the only one tasked with the responsibility of maintaining and caring for the family.⁸⁹ Raised within the confines of a Jewish *shtetl* in Russia (modern day Poland), Harry was enveloped by Judaism, the discrimination it attracted, and Judaic principles which remained the cornerstones in his adult life. Judaism provided Harry the framework for his unwavering and constant morality, "which," according to biographer Neal Gabler, "made him 'tirelessly and often tiresomely messianic about racial and religious prejudice,' the downtrodden, the persecuted, the losers, and the forgotten."⁹⁰ Faith, family, and integrity drove him. A serious man, Harry was tasked with the responsibility of caring for, and maintaining unity between his

⁸⁸ For all intent and purposes, Albert acted as vice president of Warner Bros. Studios. Jack, however, was given the title of vice president in charge of production. Jack, the most public figure between the four brothers, bore the least of the burdens associated with the studio. His personality, however, made him the most appropriate choice in dealing with talent and daily nuances associated with running a studio. Both Harry and Albert, however, ensured that the survival of the studio. The brothers evolved from film exhibitors (1908), to distributors (1909, under the Duquesne Film Exchange) and finally as producers in 1918.

⁸⁹ Gabler, 122.

⁹⁰ Neal Gabler quoted in Nancy Snow, "Confessions of a Hollywood Propagandist: Harry Warner, FDR and Celluloid Persuasion," in Martin Kaplan and Johanna Blakley, eds, *Warner's War: Politics, Pop Culture & Propaganda in Wartime Hollywood* (Los Angeles, CA: The Norman Lear Center Press, 2004), 61.

siblings. The value of unity was ingrained in Harry since the age of six by his father.⁹¹

Warner Bros. Studios' success provided, first and foremost, the financial means by which to care for the extended family. Despite growing fame and wealth, Harry sought stability and relative isolation over the glamour and uncertainty of the entertainment business that attracted youngest brothers Sam and Jack. For better or for worse, Harry was his father's son—the pragmatic, sobering conscience of the Warner brothers.⁹²

In his role as president of Warner Bros. Studios, Harry became the studio's voice while Jack became its front man—positions to which each was well suited. Acutely aware of his power within the studio and in Hollywood, Harry became the company's most respectable and poignant representative, if not the most controversial. As president, Harry was responsible for giving speeches, attending hearings, as well as navigating the ire of moralistic reformers and religious watchdogs, anti-Semites, and later, Joseph Breen, head of the Production Code Administration. Harry was fearless, calm, and precise in his defense of Warner Bros. picture's directives and goals, in addition to his allegiance to Judaism, the U.S., and democracy. He was relentless in his drive and seemingly immune to intimidation. As its president, Harry Warner became the physical representation of the Warner Bros., and for censors, the embodiment of Jewish influence, and proof of the inherent danger of Hollywood.

Charged with the task of wooing and entertaining relationships with talent and staff, Jack was similarly in his element. Harry's opposite, Jack managed interactions with the

⁹¹ Betty Warner Sheinbaum, Harry Warner's daughter, quoted in *Documentary*, 11:49; Sheinbaum in Warner-Sperling, *The Brothers Warner: Documentary Interviews*, directed by Cass Warner-Sperling (2019; CA: Warner Sister Productions), 5:42. Online <https://thebrotherswarner.com/interview/betty-warner-sheinbaum/>.

⁹² Gabler, 121-123.

multitude of personalities that comprised the studio system, but was ill versed, and uninterested, in the subtleties of discretion or humility. Case in point, during a meeting with Albert Einstein in 1931, Jack informed Einstein of his own theory of relativity, “Yeah, I have a theory about relatives, too—don’t hire them.”⁹³ Similar tact was exhibited following Warner Bros. Studios 1944 Best Picture Academy Award (Oscar) win for *Casablanca*. As producer of the film, Hal B. Wallis, whose ego rivaled Jack’s, had earned the distinction of collecting the award. Instead, Willis was sidestepped by Jack as he accepted the award on behalf of the studio. As Willis recounted, “I couldn’t believe what was happening. I had no alternative but to sit down, humiliated and furious.”⁹⁴ Jack’s acceptance of the Oscar was pure showmanship, having had no direct connection with the film before the award—the inclusion of his name as executive producer nothing more than “ego gratification.”⁹⁵

In his role as vice president of Warner Bros. Studio, Jack had input over content, production, stars, production staff, and egos—none of which exceeded his own—but was ultimately limited in the scope of his influence and power, points that he resented. While Jack liked to imagine himself as the end-all-be-all of Warner Bros. Studio, empowered by his “uncanny ability to select the right motion pictures for production,” Harry’s position as president entitled him to overrule Jack on virtually all studio related matters.⁹⁶ A caricature of a studio mogul, Jack was a credit-stealing, sentence finishing, power-hungry, man who struggled to stay silent and proved resilient to humility. In his mind, he

⁹³ Warner-Sperling, Millner, 166.

⁹⁴ Harland Lebo, *Casablanca: Behind the Scenes* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 194. Wallis further asserted that the rest of the Warner brothers had conspired against him—crowding him in the aisle to prevent him from getting to the stage. See also Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 1:04:35.

⁹⁵ Ibid. “*Casablanca* had been my creation; Jack had absolutely nothing to do with it.” See also Bernard F. Dick, *Hal Willis: Producer to the Stars* (Lexington, KY: 2004), 73-80.

⁹⁶ Warner-Sperling and Millner, xii, 166.

was a star, *the* Warner behind Warner Bros.⁹⁷ As his son, Jack Jr. succinctly summarized, Jack was a “man driven by fear, ambition, and the quest for absolute power and control—the little brother telling the big boys he saw as his tormentors to go to hell.”⁹⁸

Where Harry was serious and present, Jack, from his dyed mustache and white suits, was flamboyant and flighty to a fault. From an early age, Harry represented stability and continuity of tradition, the merging of the newly christened Warner family with the values and ideals of their Wonskolaser past. Jack, on the other hand, symbolized Wonskolaser’s extinction, and the birth of a new man. He embraced the possibilities of Warner, the assimilated self who followed dreams over responsibilities and expectations. Unlike Harry, Jack was born in London, Ontario and spent his formative years in the United States, influenced by the possibilities of capitalism and democracy.⁹⁹ His exposure to Judaism was limited to the confines of his family and, although he was not completely removed from Judaism, its unimportance in his life was a source of constant and bitter contention between himself, their father, Benjamin, and Harry. Where Harry placed their father on a pedestal, emulating Benjamin’s core values throughout his life, both privately and professionally, Jack viewed his father’s values as obsolete and openly challenged their importance and existence. Overall, Jack viewed Judaism as an annoyance as he pursued U.S. ideals. Growing up in the U.S., assimilation was ingrained

⁹⁷ See Jack L. Warner and Dean Jennings. *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1965). The only brother to write an autobiography, Jack essentially re-wrote Warner Bros. history, eliminating inconvenient truths or simply painting himself in a much better light (and other in a more negatively) as he saw fit.

⁹⁸ Warner Sperling and Millner, xi.

⁹⁹ Gabler, 122.

in him from an early age.¹⁰⁰ Capitalism, wealth, and fame drove him and the means by which he attempted to make a life for himself. He sought the spotlight, little else mattered, a point of contention for Harry.¹⁰¹ The consummate entertainer, Jack was loud, attention seeking, narcissistic, charismatic, and boisterous—traits that he cultivated and flaunted.

On a personal level, Jack and Harry loathed each other. The intensity of their animosity necessitated distance from each other, for as long as possible, initially leaving Jack and Sam in Los Angeles to manage the many stars and players of the studio system and Harry and Albert in New York where they oversaw the studios' needs on a much larger scale. Once Harry and Jack were both in Hollywood, distance was maintained in seemingly innocuous acts, such as taking lunch at different times or simply placing their offices as far from each other as the business would allow.¹⁰² Occasions in which face to face interactions were necessary, were kept at a minimum as it was not unusual for the brothers to resort to physical violence or verbal taunts when they were around each other for too long. Their disdain was so deeply rooted that on at least one occasion Harry had to be restrained from beating Jack to death with a lead pipe, the result of growing resentment for Jack's recurring absence and nonchalant delegation of responsibilities.¹⁰³ Relative peace was maintained largely due to the intervention of the remaining brothers.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 3. Benjamin initiated the Warner's assimilation. Starting with the adoption of the name "Warner," the family began to Westernize their given names, or providing their children with Anglicized names in preparation for their new lives.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 124

¹⁰² Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 1:09:40

¹⁰³ Ibid., 1:11:47. See also, Lou Lumenick, "War of the Warners," *The New York Post* (March 21, 2010). Available online, <https://nypost.com/2010/03/21/war-of-the-warners/>

Until his death in 1927, Sam functioned as the buffer between the Harry and Jack, after which the task fell upon second oldest, Albert.¹⁰⁴

Jack asserted that the animosity between he and Harry originated soon after his birth, when *he* became Pearl's favorite, effectively and irreparably altering Harry's relationship with their mother.¹⁰⁵ As a result, Jack summarized, Harry was overlooked and neglected, resulting in deep-seated resentment that tainted their relationship and only facilitated Jack's relentless drive to humiliate and embarrass Harry.¹⁰⁶ To this, Harry summarized Jack as being "incredibly insecure, the kid in the playground who needed attention," or simply "a coward."¹⁰⁷ Others have argued that the brothers' animosity was the result of competing personality traits. Harry loathed Jack on principle. Unable to adhere to stability in his personal life, Jack floundered professionally and, on a personal level, played a significant role in the familial divide. Jack made little effort to hide his disdain of his Judaic roots, flaunting it through a series of disloyalties such as divorcing his first wife, Irma, a Jewess, and marrying his mistress, Ann.¹⁰⁸ Conversely, Harry's authority over the brothers functioned as the cause for Jack's animosity—as he was incapable of accepting Harry's overreaching influence in the family or the business.¹⁰⁹ Personality,

¹⁰⁴ Warner Sperling, *Documentary*, 14:05; 1:10:38

¹⁰⁵ Little evidence, besides Jack's biased memory, exists to support this theory. Due to a lack of memoir or autobiography, what is known of Harry's view of Jack emerged during his life. This includes comments made by Harry, interviews, or testimony of others that witnessed the interactions between Harry and Jack. Jack's perspective, on the other hand, is presented through interviews and his autobiography, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*. Known for its bias, Jack's autobiography deliberately downgraded the significance of Harry to Warner Bros. Studios, and the source of the discourse between the two brothers.

¹⁰⁶ Gabler, 121.

¹⁰⁷ Cass Warner-Sperling in Lumenick.

¹⁰⁸ Warner-Sperling and Millner, 196-197. Additional infractions included naming his child after himself, a break from Judaic tradition and indifference toward his family as he sought control of Warner Bros.

¹⁰⁹ Warner-Sperling and Millner, xii.

however, was a symptom of their deteriorating relationship. Religion and its role in assimilation functioned as the root of the irreparable divide.

Judaism—how, when, and if it should be applied to their everyday life—was a source of constant contention between the Jack and Harry. Jack’s relationship with their father, Benjamin, and, significantly, how Harry perceived their relationship reflected on *his* own values and ideals, played a likely source for Harry’s and Jack’s strained relationship. For Jack, Benjamin personified the instability of the old world in the new. The catalyst for family’s emigration, Benjamin initiated the adoption of the new family name, and influenced the Americanization of given names, in an effort to meld more easily into their adoptive home.¹¹⁰ Despite these changes Benjamin was steadfast in his unwillingness to assimilate fully, despite his fierce loyalty and devotion to the U.S.—he remained devout, often spoke Yiddish, kept kosher, deliberately lived within walking distance of a synagogue to respect Talmudic law, and attempted to instill the same values in his children.¹¹¹ For Benjamin, America represented freedom, prosperity, ability to practice one’s desired faith, and to be educated. Being a Jew, however, required both religious continuity and vigilance against the hostilities that Judaism garnered. As such, a Jew needed to be continuously aware of potential threats, and use any “weapon you have at your command” to ensure the right of religious freedoms.¹¹²

While Harry championed Benjamin’s call for action personally and professional as both a Jew and as an American, Jack distanced himself from any association or

¹¹⁰ Michael Freedland, *The Warner Brothers* (London, Great Britain, 1983), 5; See also Sinclair. The name Warner was the result of two intertwining events: the immigration officer’s inability or lack of interest in deciphering the name Wonskolaser or Wonsal and Benjamin’s desire to fit into his new surroundings.

¹¹¹ Gabler, 123.

¹¹² Ibid., Harry recalled his father once telling him, “Son, you’re going to have to fight with the weapon you have at your command so that the children and their children may have a right to live and have a Faith, no matter what their Faith may be, in our great country, America.”

identification as a Jew. He often demeaned Benjamin's beliefs openly, passive-aggressively, and with hostility. Jack's hostility was expressed through the instigation of arguments in an effort to belittle Benjamin while inflating his own views; through the divorce of his first wife, a Jew; the naming of his first and only son Jack, in violation of Judaic tradition; having numerous affairs with actresses; in addition to a myriad of daily actions, such as eating ham.¹¹³ In rejecting Harry and his father, Jack rewrote his past and influenced his future.

As a result, despite their professional symbiosis, theirs was a strained familial dynamic. The brothers were split by a "moral fault line" that pitted brothers against brother and Judaism against Americanism, bonded by their certainty and devotion to America, patriotism, democracy, and, despite their varied approaches, their desire to assimilate into mainstream U.S. society.¹¹⁴ The cost of assimilation divided the brothers into two camps, the first of which was promoted by the youngest and most assimilated brothers, Sam and Jack. It was their belief that the existence and adherence of Judaism as part of their identity conflicted with the ideals of their adoptive home. Complete assimilation into U.S. society required, if not demanded, the rejection of the Old World for the New—customs, dress, the self, mate, as well as religious beliefs. The two could not and should not co-exist.

Older brothers Harry and Albert identified Judaism as integral to their identity, and its unfettered practice as a basic civil right. Rejection or denial of religion as a result of assimilation was contrary to the basic freedoms the United States allotted its citizens. To reject or deny their connection to Judaism would be a disservice to themselves and the

¹¹³ Gabler, 123.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

democratic ideals they held dear. Unwavering in his convictions, Harry Warner was proud of his Jewish heritage and actively observed and practiced the tenets of Judaism in his private life. He did not reject assimilation. Instead, he viewed assimilation as dedication to the values and morals that exemplified America. These included, but were not limited to freedom, tolerance, diversity, and patriotism. Being a good citizen did not necessitate the elimination of personal beliefs. On the contrary, it demanded their existence. For the brothers, these conflicting definitions of assimilation and their professional intertwining resulted in the production of films that represented the American Jewish community's struggle for identity—questioning what it meant to be a Jew, what it meant to be an American, and the desire to reconcile the two.¹¹⁵

Anti-Semitism and Road Blocks to Assimilation

Complicating the process of assimilation, U.S. Jews faced a series of discriminatory barriers, particularly anti-Semitism, that all but secured their exclusion from white, Anglo-Saxon, mainstream American society. As Jews, the brothers were collectively and acutely aware of this reality. Initially, U.S. anti-Semitism permeated America's social fabric through a series of restrictive and discriminatory restrictions that focused primarily on worship, trade, politics, and citizenship.¹¹⁶ By the 1870s, as Jews became established socially and financially, more broad and far-reaching restrictions developed regarding

¹¹⁵ It should be noted that not every American Jew sought assimilation. Geography often played a role in assimilationist motives. In Chicago, for example, a rooted Jewish community, largely segregated from the non-Jewish population, prevented large-scale assimilation. See Erich Rosenthal, "Acculturation Without Assimilation? The Jewish Community of Chicago Illinois," *American Journal of Sociology*, 66, no. 3 (Nov., 1960), 275-288; and Ewa Morawska, *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890-1940* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

¹¹⁶ See Carr, 23. See also Dobkowski, 10-13; Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654-2000* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 2004); Max J. Kohler, "Civil Status of the Jew in Colonial New York," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, No. 6, (1897), 81-106; Richard B. Morris, "Civil Liberties and The Jewish Tradition in Early America," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, Vol. 46, No. 1, (September, 1956), 20-39.

employment, higher education, and housing. Jews were refused service in resorts and hotels, such as Henry Hilton's Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga, New York and The Manhattan Beach Corporation (MBB) in Coney Island. Austin Corbin, president of the MBB, justified the discriminatory policy explaining, "We do not like Jews as class. As a rule they make themselves offensive. They are a detestable and vulgar people."¹¹⁷ It was not unusual for hotel and resort owners to compare Jews to dogs. Social aversion to Jews extended to residential neighborhoods. Through a series of restrictive covenants which included informal agreements, legal limitations written in property deeds, and agreements between real estate brokers and homeowners, Gentiles effectively prevented the sale of property to Jews (among others deemed "undesirables"). In the case of Baltimore's Roland Park, real estate restrictions originated in 1913 and remained for fifty years—the conservative "Not In My Back Yard" (NIMBY).¹¹⁸ Mostly, as Jews moved in, white Christians moved out.

Unlike its European counterpart, U.S. anti-Semitism initially fell short of physical violence. Instead, until 1915, anti-Semitism presented as "polite," "hospitable," or "passive"—verbal attacks alongside omnipresent European literature that reaffirmed anti-Jewish stereotypes, assuring its permanence in America's discriminatory legacy.¹¹⁹ Despite its overreaching qualities, anti-Semitism existed primarily in the fringes of U.S. society. As such, Jews were lulled into a false state of security which reaffirmed a

¹¹⁷ Corbin quoted in Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism*, 40. See also Higham, 127; Richard E. von Fraenkel, "'No Jews, Dogs, or Consumptives': Comparing Anti-Jewish Discrimination in Late-Nineteenth-Century Germany and the United States," *Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitism in International Perspective*—Open Peer Review, (May, 12, 2016), 7. Available online https://antisem19c.hypotheses.org/630#_ftnref11

¹¹⁸ Antero Pietala, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 2010), xi, 36; Fraenkel, 9.

¹¹⁹ For more on "passive" anti-Semitism, see Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism* and Gerald Sorin, *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

common belief amongst Jewish immigrants that the U.S. would provide permanence. Following the arrival of the second wave of Jewish immigration in the late nineteenth-century, and rising anti-Semitism, Jews began to question the viability of the U.S. as a safe-haven and home.

Unlike other immigrant groups, Eastern European Jews faced discrimination from anti-Semites, nativists, xenophobes, as well as established German-Jews. Stigmatized as “exotic migrants from the East,” Eastern European immigrants were subjected to discriminatory measures created to curtail the spread of disease, real or perceived. In 1892, for example, shortly after the *U.S. Nevada* arrived in New York harbor thirty Russian Jews were detained and quarantined under the direction of Dr. William Jenkins, health official of the Port of New York City, despite lacking outward signs of Typhus. Conversely, other steerage passengers, including nine-three Scandinavians were granted immediate entrance into the U.S.¹²⁰

Established German-Jews viewed the arrival of millions of Eastern European Jews fearfully. Perceiving the émigrés as a threat to their relatively comfortable, upwardly mobile, and seemingly inconspicuous existence, American Jews of German descent openly discriminated against the influx of largely uneducated, and presumably “radicalized,” Jews of Eastern European origins. This included efforts to restrict entrance of Eastern European Jews into the United States.¹²¹ Despite German Jews’ efforts, two events challenged the Jewish hierarchy— the trial of Leo Frank, and America’s

¹²⁰ Howard Merkel, *Quarantine! Eastern European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 73-74. See also Fraenkel, 13.

¹²¹ See Sheldon Morris Neuringer, *American Jewry and United States Immigration Policy, 1881-1953*, (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1980). German Jews’ views toward Eastern European Jews extended from century old hostilities.

involvement in the First World War. Both forced German Jews to forfeiting distinguishing markers of superiority, creating a general category of Jews.

In 1913, a white thirteen-year-old girl of Irish descent, Mary Phagan, was found murdered in the basement of the National Pencil Company in Atlanta, Georgia. Although strangulation appeared to be the cause of death, Phagan's body suggested she had also endured sexual assault.¹²² Despite the fact that Jim Conley, a factory janitor, was initially arrested for the crime after being seen cleaning bloodstains from his shirt, the factory's manager, Leo Frank, was charged with, and ultimately convicted of, her murder. Conley, an African American with a history of violence, became the state's main witness against Frank, a well-to-do, Ivy league educated Jew from the North. The case brought national attention to Jews and anti-Semites who viewed the case as a platform to discuss various miscarriages of justice, including the murder of an innocent white girl, the arrest of an innocent Jewish man, and the role of a black man. The Leo Frank case also illuminated issues of sexuality, race, and political tensions which manifested at the end of the Civil War.¹²³

Based largely on Conley's testimony and Georgians' animosity toward Frank, Frank was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. Frank's advocates cited police intimidation and witness tampering among other injustices, and petitioned Georgia's Governor John M. Slaton to review the case. Slaton's in-depth assessment of the case resulted in the commutation of Frank's sentence to life imprisonment. Slaton believed Frank innocent and intended the commutation as a cooling off period. It was Slaton's

¹²² For more on the Leo Frank Case, see Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (Athens, GA: Georgia University Press, 2008).

¹²³ Nancy MacLean, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism," *The Journal of American History*, 78, 3 (Dec. 1991), 917-948.

assertion that Frank's innocence would be proven and his sentence over-turned. The decision infuriated many Southerners, leading to riots and demonstrations in Atlanta, the severity of which caused Slaton to fear for his life. Members of Phagan's hometown of Marietta, identifying themselves as the "Knights of Mary Phagan" fulfilled Frank's original death sentence, removing him from his cell, and lynching him on an oak tree facing Phagan's home.

For U.S. Jews, the Frank case initially proved unifying, breaking down divisions between Eastern European and German Jews in their efforts to provide legal, moral, and financial support for Frank. Through a combination of philanthropic and grass-root community activism, U.S. Jews raised funds for Frank's defense, published editorials in the Jewish press, and organized prominent Jews to speak out against the perceived injustice. The Frank case became a Jewish cause. It yielded unexpected consequences.

Not all Jews were eager to take up arms for Frank, fearing an increase of anti-Semitic violence after being outed as Jews. Fear of being discovered a Jew prompted some prominent Jews, such as Adolph Ochs, owner of *The New York Times* (NYT), to question the ramifications of voluntarily disclosing his Judaism. To the "non Jewish Jew," as far as Ochs was concerned, Judaism was a "religion, like Methodism or Lutheranism, and nothing more."¹²⁴ Ochs did not identify as a Jew or practice Judaism. He was an American, not a Jew. Ochs feared that using the *Times* as an outlet for the Frank case, or any other Jewish cause, would result in loss of credibility and the designation as a "Jewish" paper. Ultimately, Ochs acquiesced, not as a Jew or for a Jewish cause, but insisting that he did so as an American, "teaching 'a civic-lesson of the world, [that]

¹²⁴ Tiffin and Jones, 93.

people had only to be appraised of the true facts to enable them to make the ‘right’ decision’.”¹²⁵

Ochs’ hesitation was quickly validated. Following Frank’s lynching, Ochs pleaded with Georgian newspapers to reprint a *Times* editorial that called “on justice-minded residents of the state to prove Frank’s innocence posthumously.” Most papers rejected his plea. One, *The Macon Telegraph*, went so far as to respond via telegraph stating that the “outside interference of ... Jews, especially the ‘offensive propaganda’ printed in *The New York Times*, had ‘made it necessary to lynch Frank’.”¹²⁶ Ochs was flooded with hate mail and threats of a personal nature, the severity of which impacted his decision to “never again ... publicly support a cause, certainly not one involving a Jew.” Ochs’ decision guaranteed that op-eds and news regarding Hitler’s ascension and the violence attributed to the Nazi Party would not be published—a devastating consequence as Jewish persecution and anti-Semitism intensified in Germany during the 1930s.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Ibid. Ochs never viewed anti-Semitism as a factor in Frank’s conviction. He had lived in Chattanooga and believed that he knew Georgians and their general lack of anti-Semitism. He was unwilling to believe that being a Jew in the South would or could be considered a “handicap.” See also Sheila Solhtalab, “The Representation of the Economic Persecution of German Jews in *The New York Times*, 1933-1938,” Master’s Thesis, The University of Toledo, May 2011, 2-3. Other newspapers criticized the Frank case. The *Atlanta Journal* spoke against the proceedings, resulting in allegations that the concern had been “bought with Jew money.” See Carr, 40. “Jews were aware of invidious associations between Jew and journalist. In fund-raising for Leo Franks’s appeals, men like Albert D. Lasker avoided any appearance of a connection between Jews and the press, so that ‘their work can do no harm, but only good.’ As Dinnerstein notes, ‘the Southerners who feared and resented aliens could not have been expected to heed the pleas of Northern, urban, Jewish-owned newspapers.’ Ten years later, prominent Jews even approached *The Atlanta Constitution*, requesting that the paper not run any new information regarding Frank’s innocence. According to Pierre Van Passes, these Jews feared repercussions if another story on Frank ran.”

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 96, 155. Following Ochs’ death, his son-in-law, Arthur Sulzberger, took over Ochs’ role as editor *NYT*. Sulzberger and Ochs shared similar traits and beliefs, in particular the steadfast belief that the *NYT* should not be utilized as an outlet for Jewish causes, which assisted in preserving that tradition at *NYT*. As anti-Semitism intensified within the United States and throughout the world, Sulzberger intensified the position that *NYT* not be perceived as a Jewish paper, that it focus instead on unbiased reporting. Economic and personal commitments drove Sulzberger’s drive towards neutrality. See also Solhtalab, 4.

Frank's lawyer, Louis Marshall, President of the American Jewish Council (AJC), adopted a similar philosophy to Ochs while trying Frank's case. Marshall was adamant that, despite his prominence within the Jewish community, the case should not be viewed as exclusively Jewish. In an attempt to conceal his connection to Jewish leadership, Marshall insisted that his representation of Frank be presented not as representative of the AJC, but rather as a private defense attorney. That he happened to be Jewish was of no consequence to the case. Marshall further requested that Jewish activism be restricted, "lay[ing] low," while he simultaneously petitioned non-Jews friends and leaders, as well as Christian ministers, to publish pro-Frank commentary in the Southern press as part of his defense strategy—effectively winning the hearts and minds of Southerners.¹²⁸ Frank's eventual lynching failed to rattle his resolve. In Marshall's mind, Frank's death was not the result of anti-Semitism, but rather a deterioration in the Georgia criminal justice system. Frank was a victim of "judicial murder," not anti-Semitism. The case, "involved fundamental principles of justice in which the religious faith of Frank was only an incident which was injected into the situation...." Frank's case tested Marshall's judicial resolve, maintaining that Jewish identity had no connection to Frank's "denial of legal equality to any American, of whatever race, religion, or creed."¹²⁹ Marshall's decision was based on a political and organizational strategy intended on minimizing potential negative exposure of Jews.

Anti-Semitism was central to the Frank case and undermined the judicial process. Active anti-Jewish commentary, led primarily by populist and lawyer Tom Watson,

¹²⁸ Woester, 73-74. See also Morton Rosenstock, *Louis Marshall, Defender of Jewish Rights* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1965); and Henry B. Leonard, "Louis Marshall and Immigration Restriction, 1906-1924" *American Jewish Archives*, 24, no. 1 (April, 1972), 6-26.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

through *Watson's Magazine* and the *Jeffersonian*, enflamed an already biased and frustrated base through constant reinforcement of anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jewish sexual prowess, press influence, and financial manipulation.¹³⁰ Watson's depiction of Frank, in specific, and Jews in general, unleashed upon Georgians vile images of Jewish sadism. Watson characterized Frank as a lustful "foul degenerate."¹³¹ For example, despite proof that Phagan was not raped, Watson wrote,

...the little Georgian heroine who perished at the age of fourteen—died because she would not yield her person to the insistent lust of the vilest Jew that has lived, since the desert winds blew into space the ashes of Sodom and Gomorrah.¹³²

The result of Watson's intervention was radical and immediate. First, anti-Semitism transitioned from "polite" to violent. As a result, American Jews were forced to admit the existence of anti-Semitism and, more significantly, that its prevalence reinforced their tenuous and vulnerable position as outsiders in their adoptive home. No matter their status, place of origin, or financial worth, they were Jews. Second, the Frank case accentuated the existence of anti-Semitism through the creation of both the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Lastly, despite their temporary unity, the Frank case also helped to create a wider divide between the U.S.'s Jewish population. Some embraced activism to institute change and security, and others argued

¹³⁰ Watson persisted in his claim for judicial manipulation after Frank's death following the settlement of a civil suit brought upon the National Pencil Factory by Phagan's mother. Watson argued that the settlement proved guilt and Jewish conspiracy. See "The Final Confession of Leo Frank's Guilt," *The Jeffersonian*, vol. 13, no. 18 (April 27, 1916), p. 1, 9. In the Thomas E. Watson Papers #755, Southern Historical Collection, *The Wilson Library-University of Carolina at Chapel Hill*. (collection 755, Digital Item 417) Digital Collection available online The Thomas E. Watson Papers Digital Collection, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/watson/aboutwatson.php>. See also Dobkowski, 188-189.

¹³¹ Tom Watson, "How Much Longer Will the People of Atlanta Endure the Lawless Doings of William J. Burns?", *The Jeffersonian*, Vol. 11, No.1 (April 23, 1914), p 1, 9. Collection 755, Digital Item 321, *The Wilson Library-University of Carolina at Chapel Hill*.

¹³² Tom Watson, "While Leo Frank is Loafing at the State Farm, the Rich Jews Continue to Defame the People and the Courts of Georgia," *The Jeffersonian*, Vol. 12, No. 28, (July 15, 1915), p 1-2. In Thomas E. Watson Papers #755. Collection 755, Digital Item 377. Digital Collection, *The Wilson Library-University of Carolina at Chapel Hill*,

that passivity, or silence behind-the-scenes negotiations, would help maintain or elevate their position within U.S. society. Jews chose their loyalties. In silence, Jews claimed loyalty to America that superseded any connection to Judaism in the hopes of ensuring security, permanence, and integration into mainstream society. In action, Jews openly embraced their Judaic roots and supported other Jews, potentially forfeiting assimilation.

The First World War caused an unintended and dramatic rise in U.S. anti-Semitic sentiment that peaked in the early twentieth century and persisted well into the 1950s. During the war, Jews were restricted by a fervent anti-immigrant, pro-U.S. sentiment that pushed for loyalty to America above all else. Immigrant loyalties, particularly those of German descent, were tested by reinvigorated “hyphenated Americanism” and rise of the politically driven “100 percent Americanism.” Both demanded unwavering loyalty to America, forcing immigrants to forfeit any nationalistic bonds or expression of support for their homeland.¹³³ President Woodrow Wilson questioned the loyalties of hyphenated Americans stating,

There is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is a good American. ... Any man who carries a hyphen about with him carries a dagger that he is ready to plunge into the vitals of this Republic whenever he gets ready.¹³⁴

Wilson’s reference, historian Steven Carr argued, “evoked a powerful connection between patriotism and ethnicity. His hyphens symbolized dual allegiance; a reminder that ‘only part’ of the immigrant had ‘come over’.” The loss of the hyphen would center the immigrant in America, “heart and thought and all. ... centered nowhere but in the

¹³³ Tina Stewart Brakebill, “From ‘German Days’ to ‘100 Percent Americanism,’ McLean County, Illinois 1913-1918: German Americans, World War One, and One Community’s Reaction.” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1998-), 95, no. 2 (Summer, 2002), 148-171. See also Carr, 35; Carr, 29-36.

¹³⁴ Mario R. Di Nunzio (ed), *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), 412.

emotions and the purpose of the policies of the United States.”¹³⁵ As a result, in an effort to prove their loyalty, Jews adjusted to the demands of Populists, xenophobes, and nativists through the adoption of American sounding names, the rejection of Judaism, even changing their style of dress and appearance, such as the removal of facial hair for men or wigs for women.¹³⁶

Within this period U.S. anti-Semitism transitioned from the fringes to the mainstream, reaching its zenith due largely to the impact of crises that expanded beyond America’s borders including: the First Red Scare, the Great Depression, the rise of Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist German Worker’s Party (or Nazi Party) in Germany, and a second impending European conflict.¹³⁷ The initial transition during the first Red Scare was influenced by fear and propaganda that emanated as a result of Russia’s Bolshevik Revolution and its transition to communism. Fear of America’s collapse due to a Russian/communist takeover propelled a fear-based anti-communist crusade focusing on immigrants and supporters of communist/socialist ideology. Between 1917-1920, the U.S. government targeted so-called “radicals”—anarchists, Bolsheviks (and sympathizers), communists, radical leftists, and dissidents—under the auspices of the Espionage Act (1917), Sedition Act (1918), and subsequent “Palmer Raids” (1919-1920).¹³⁸ Eastern European Jews came under scrutiny of the U.S. government, baring the

¹³⁵ Woodrow Wilson quoted in Carr, 35-36. “Patriotism equaled assimilation and rejection of the home country. After the United States entered the World War I, the hyphen’s iconicity represented not only the potential disloyalty of the German-American but the potential disloyalty of any perceived foreigner. Former President Theodore Roosevelt explained its importance quite succinctly in 1916: ‘The hyphen ... is incompatible with patriotism.’

¹³⁶ Barbara A. Schreier, *Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880-1920* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Historical Society, 1994).

¹³⁷ Chapter 3 will discuss anti-Semitism during the 1930s-1940s.

¹³⁸ Larry Ceplair, “The Film Industry’s Battle Against Left-Wing Influences, from the Russian revolution to the Blacklist,” *Film History*, vol. 20 (2008), p 399-400. See also Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The*

brunt of persecution, due largely to their perceived association with Russia, their influence on labor unions, membership within the American Communist Party, as well as a general perception as radical “others.” Ironically, many so-called “radical” Jews gravitated toward radical ideologies only after being exposed to them in the United States. Although most so-called “Red” activity was limited to writers and the newly formed Screenwriter’s Guild, Hollywood Jews as a whole experienced increased surveillance and discrimination due to their general association with Eastern European radicalism.

As a result of increased persecution resulting in incarceration and/or deportation, limitations within the job market and institutions of higher learning, even death, Eastern European Jews were forced to seek out new and inventive means of sustaining themselves in their adoptive homeland. Fueled by the restrictive nature of anti-Semitism, necessity, and desire, Eastern European Jews gravitated toward the garment industry, food and construction industries, as well as venues of entertainment within the arts (film, theater, art). This led some to create Hollywood.¹³⁹

Eastern European Jews from the New York film industry gravitated to California as means of disentangling themselves from restrictive distribution regulations imposed by the Motion Picture Patents Company, or “Edison Trust.” Comprised of white-Anglo Saxon Protestants, the “Edison Trust” controlled both moving picture equipment and film stock, which limited competition and influenced film content. Independent distributors, primarily Eastern European Jews, were stymied within the industry, blocked from

Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

¹³⁹ Gabler, 5.

distribution and production and often forced to exhibit films that perpetuated racist depictions of Jews, blacks, and other immigrants while glorifying whites. California offered freedom from the restrictions of the “Edison Trust” as well as the potential to create a society free from established and restrictive hierarchies (in both industry and society). Furthermore, California offered additional perks of cheap land and labor, reliable weather, picturesque scenery, and year-round outdoor filming. Hollywood, Warner brother’s biographer Graham Daseler summarized, represented an “egalitarian opportunity.”¹⁴⁰ As Jews moved west however, Anti-Semitism followed.

Conservative Americans perceived Jews (and Hollywood as an extension) as a threat to many aspects of American life, including capitalism, democracy, sexual norms, propriety, religion, and race. As such, Hollywood Jews become special targets due to their visibility and prominence as the curators and creators of American culture. White Anglo-Saxon Protestants viewed themselves as victims of “Jewish popular-culture entrepreneurs” responsible for “unleashing libidinal impulses imagined synonymous with African Americans.”¹⁴¹ Public figures such as Henry Ford and Charles Lindberg not only equated Jews to blacks, they questioned Jewish morality and their influence on American culture. Jewish sexual prowess was further confirmed by stereotypes of the Jewish movie producer, as characterized by scholar Harold Brackman, a “moral lecher who debauched innocent Christian girls [as] much as Leo Frank was supposed to have corrupted Mary Phagan before he killed her....”¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Graham Daseler, “Fall of the House of Warner: The Warner Bros,” *Bright Lights Film Journal* (January 25, 2014). Retrieved June 12, 2019. Online at https://brightlightsfilm.com/the-fall-of-the-house-of-warner-the-warner-brothers/#.Xm_TC257nUp.

¹⁴¹ Brackman, p 1-4.

¹⁴² Ibid., 4.

Since its inception, Hollywood as an industry wrestled with dueling perceptions—those that credited it with shaping and creating American culture and ideals (at times for the betterment of American society), and those that viewed Hollywood as a veritable den of iniquity, that caused the decline of American values, morals, and virtues. In some ways, both were correct. Hollywood transforms. It reflects that which society is experiencing and that which it desires. It is central to the national culture.¹⁴³ Hollywood acquiesced to the demands of the period in as much as it helped to foster its transition, including the evolution from tame and virtuous ideals of Victorianism to risqué indulgence, both on and off the screen. That being said, Hollywood leaders cautiously tread a fine line between the demands of the past and the present for fear of both social alienation and financial decline.

Nearly exclusively created by Eastern European Jews, Hollywood as an industry became synonymous with Jews, a “Jewish invention,” and Jews with “moguls”—“autocratic, alien figures” who controlled Hollywood.¹⁴⁴ From the silent era of film to its Golden Age (1920s-1960s), the impact of “Jewishness as an American cultural force” emerged as one of the period’s “most extensive, diverse and contentious discussions.”¹⁴⁵ Jewish “otherness” was linked to a variety of undesirables of the period, including blacks, and those that fit within the generic title of “Oriental.”¹⁴⁶ These designations stressed the separateness of Jewishness and inherent difference between Jews and Christian

¹⁴³ Hoberman and Shandler, 67. See also Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁴⁴ Steven Carr refers to this as the Hollywood Question, a reference to its more violent European counterpart, “The Jewish Question.” For the purposes of this paper, unless otherwise stated, Hollywood and Jews will be one and the same. Furthermore, the term “Hollywood” embodies something far greater than geography or business, becoming an entity of its own.

¹⁴⁵ Carr, 47, 48.

¹⁴⁶ Hoberman and Shandler, 50.

Americans. Jewish “otherness” underlined animal instinct over refinement, the vulgar over the pure and moralistic and innate foreign qualities that “corrupt[ed]” and “destabiliz[ed].” Jews, anti-Semites argued, threatened the “integrity of American culture.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, for some, the problem with Hollywood superseded *what* was being produced, for the problem was *who* led production.

Control over the dissemination of material for public consumption developed into a multi-faceted, one struggle. Anti-Hollywood and anti-Semites in religious, civic and political organizations, such as the Catholic Church’s National League of Decency, Protestant’s National Board of Censorship, and The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), argued that Jews created films and conditions that not only promulgated anti-Christian ideals, they destroyed that which was fundamentally American.¹⁴⁸ This position was exacerbated following a series of widespread, publicized, scandals involving “stars” and those seeking fame, most famously the murder of William Desmond Taylor in 1922, the alleged rape of actor Virginia Rappe by film star Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle, and the sexual innuendo that immortalized Mae West.¹⁴⁹ Hollywood appeared as sexually immoral as its critics charged.

The fundamental argument focused on the fate of American culture: who would control it, and how Hollywood (synonymous with Jews) could be prevented from influencing it.¹⁵⁰ In Hollywood, Jews, watchdogs argued, behaved as *Jews*.¹⁵¹ As

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 50.

¹⁴⁸ Dobkowski, 200. See also Alexander McGregor, *The Catholic Church and Hollywood: Censorship and Morality in 1930s Cinema* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2013); Frank Walsh, *Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996). Volumes have been written on Hollywood censorship and its censors.

¹⁴⁹ Carr, 64.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 60, 61.

individuals, watchdogs viewed Jews as deceiving opportunists, manipulating their way into America while taking advantage of the vulnerability of its citizens. Furthermore, they described Jews within a collective as clannish, selective, and plotters—perpetual others that attempted to control, transform, and reap the benefits of their deceptive, amoral, schemes. As such, the aforementioned self-appointed policing groups believed that controlling Hollywood meant protecting America’s morals and virtuous Christian ideals from the immoral, corrupt, ravenous influence of Jewish Hollywood.¹⁵²

Anti-Hollywood reformers and anti-Semites failed to recognize that Jewish Hollywood moguls had no intention of destabilizing American culture, nor did they seek to alter or corrupt it. On the contrary, Hollywood Jews sought its embrace. Acutely aware of their position within American society, as well as the prevalence of Anti-Semitism in America, Hollywood films reflected the Jewish moguls’ struggle for acculturation and acceptance through the deliberate reflection of U.S. ideals and the omission of any connection to Judaism.¹⁵³ Jews accentuated that which was America at the cost of their personal identity and past. As Neal Gabler succinctly summarized, “above all things, [Hollywood Jewish moguls] wanted to be regarded as American, not Jews; they wanted to reinvent themselves as new men.”¹⁵⁴ Hollywood Jews attempted to transform

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 61. *Italics original.* Carr describes the Jewish character in a previous section focused on Jewish control of the theater—the precursor for Jewish control of Hollywood. Discussed as the “Hollywood Question,” Jewish influence in theater and later Hollywood, “menaced the very fiber of the nation” as Jews not only created “salacious material” that “degraded public morals and taste; any North American woman hoping to land on the stage had to fend off lascivious Jewish parvenus,” 42-53.

¹⁵² Censorship of Hollywood will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

¹⁵³ Welky, 27.

¹⁵⁴ Gabler, 2.

themselves, personally and publicly, to a “pattern of American respectability as they interpreted it.”¹⁵⁵

In general, Hollywood’s association with Judaism was largely, if not completely, eliminated from general conversation. Jewish actors changed their names to sound more American, Judaism (as a word or topic) was almost completely eliminated from the screen, and privately, any connection to Judaism was discussed only in hushed tones.¹⁵⁶ Hollywood Jews viewed themselves as Americans first, Jews only sometimes, if ever. On the screen, films centered on entertainment for the sake of entertainment—romances, comedies, and dramas that failed to discuss any relevant topics of the period, erring on the side of caution for fear of financial loss, or worse, exposure as Jews.

Although Warner Bros. Studios produced films within the aforementioned categories, they continued an active discussion of issues that related directly to Jews and cloaked their efforts with a veil of patriotism. The studio’s continued focus on Judaism was largely attributed to Harry’s influence and belief that films could be used to “educate and uplift humanity.”¹⁵⁷

Harry’s intellectual maturity influenced the production of films that were both patriotic and unapologetically Jewish. Films possessed greater meaning for Harry. He wanted them to connect with the audience on a deeper level beyond mere

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁶ *Hollywoodism*, 54:40. An abridged list of famous Jewish actors who changed their names to sound Gentile include, but are not limited to, Kirk Douglas (Issur Danielovitch Demsky), George Gershwin (Jacob Gershowitz), Theda Bara (Theodosia Goodman), George Burns (Nathan Birnbaum), Paul Muni (Frederich Meshilem Meier Weisenfreund), Lauren Bacall (Betty Persky), Eddie Cantor (Isidore Itzkowitz), Melvyn Douglas (Melvyn Edouard Hesselberg), Edward G. Robinson (Emanuel Goldenberg), Shelley Winters (Sherley Schrift), and Tony Curtis (Bernard Herschel Schwartz).

¹⁵⁷ Sperling and Millner, xi.

entertainment.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, he wanted the audience to understand and desire that connection. Warner Bros.' survival depended on both—wisdom that he carried throughout his tenure as president of Warner Bros. Studios. It was he who understood early on that Hollywood had a voice, and, after 1933, Welky argued, “more than any time before, or since.”¹⁵⁹ Harry led Warner Bros. to produce of films that challenged social norms while highlighting social changes and injustices, including racism, religious intolerance, and war. Each theme was central to Harry's core foundation and the company motto, “Combining good picture—making with good citizenship.” Through the combined efforts of the brothers, though not without struggle and compromise, Warner Bros. films functioned as Harry's weapon of choice for achieving social change by educating, enlightening, and entertaining.¹⁶⁰

Warner Bros.' Americanization

The Warner brothers produced films that were unapologetically driven by their own brand of political and social morals—they, Warner Bros. screenwriter Frank Pierson stressed, “made films *they* wanted to see and that they thought were valuable and worthwhile.”¹⁶¹ By “accurately portraying reality” in film, the brothers produced films that transformed society, rather than ignoring injustice and discrimination, while still belonging and being accepted into it. Their initial lack of status within the film industry functioned as their greatest asset, and their “clannish” nature forced them to rely heavily on each other, trusting no one outside the family.¹⁶² The brothers' unwavering trust and

¹⁵⁸ Gabler, 120.

¹⁵⁹ Welky, 4.

¹⁶⁰ Gabler, 120; Warner-Sperling, 1:29:02.

¹⁶¹ Frank Pierson quoted in Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 1:27:05.

¹⁶² Gabler, 131.

professional commitment to each other extended to their willingness to wager prestige, social standing, and financial security for the production of films that they deemed meaningful.¹⁶³ It was not enough to make films. For fifty years, Cass Warner Sperling, Harry Warner's grand-daughter, summarized, "they did this with no education, a huge amount of chutzpah and the belief as long as they were told they couldn't do something they knew they were on the right track."¹⁶⁴

The brothers' indifference to "for entertainment only" status-quo of production, combined with their unilateral desire to produce films of substance, motivated them to purchase the rights to James W. Gerard autobiographical account of this time as U.S. Ambassador to Germany, *My Four Years in Germany* (1918).¹⁶⁵ A national best-seller, the book stressed in vivid detail the atrocities committed between 1914 and 1918 by the Germans under the command of Kaiser Wilhelm II: murder, rape, sexual assault, and torture, all under the guise of war.¹⁶⁶ Sam initially sought the rights to the book, arguing for the contents' significance. Other studios also sought book rights, including William Fox of Fox Studio who offered \$75,000 for the rights.¹⁶⁷ Ultimately, the decision was Harry's. He who secured the deal for \$50,000 after convincing Gerard that "Warner Bros. was the largest studio in Hollywood and it would deliver the biggest box office," despite

¹⁶³ Steven Ross, in Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 6:25. "Warner Bros. was America. You could not have a Harry and Jack Warner saying: 'The hell with my profits.' There are some things more important than profit. I think any studio chief who said that today would be looking for another job tomorrow."

¹⁶⁴ Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 1:20.

¹⁶⁵ Gabler, 130-131. The screenplay was based off of Gerard's book of the same title. The film was produced while World War I was still in progress and has been considered a propaganda film.

¹⁶⁶ James W. Gerard, *My Four Years in Germany*, [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7238/7238-h/7238-h.htm) Ebook, 2005. Retrieved January 22, 2019, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7238/7238-h/7238-h.htm>

¹⁶⁷ Thomson, 51.

a lack of funds and standing in Hollywood.¹⁶⁸ Harry argued forcefully for peace and patriotism,

Mr. Ambassador film is the great founder of peace. When people understand each other, they need not fight. I feel it is out patriotic duty to thousands of Americans who cannot read to make a motion picture of your book. ... Ambassador, the movie I make can carry to the American people and the world, your stirring warning about the menace of the German military threat. The picture will help arouse the world at large as to why we must fight for civilization.¹⁶⁹

As their first production, *My Four Years in Germany* was a sociological experiment focused on testing the American public's susceptibility and receptiveness to films that preached tolerance, awareness, and patriotism through the intermingling of fact and entertainment—the would-be stamp of a Warner Bros. production. The results were mixed.

Despite the success of *My Four Years in Germany*, between 1918 and 1927, Warner Bros. Studio struggled to survive. Its insularity as a studio family, costs of the new studio, general distrust for New York bankers due to their anti-Semitic leanings, and status as a “dim speck” within the “the Hollywood constellation” left the brothers vulnerable.¹⁷⁰ Between 1923-1925, the brothers relied on Rinty, a German Shepherd and the star of *Rin Tin Tin* films, to keep the Warner Bros. viable. Lovingly referred to as “the mortgage lifter” by Jack Rinty singlehandedly kept the studio alive due to his popularity and

¹⁶⁸ Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 17:35. The interaction between Gerard and Harry Warner, Cass explained, yielded the creation of the “famous Hollywood back-end deal.” See also Gabler, 130-131. Other studios were interested in the rights, offering more money and better standing than the brothers.

¹⁶⁹ Thomson, 52-53. Harry Warner quoted in Cass Warner Sperling, *The Brothers Warner: The Intimate Story of a Hollywood Studio Family Dynasty* (Los Angeles, CA: Warner Sisters, 1998), 60-65.

¹⁷⁰ Gabler, 131. “According to Milton Sperling, Harry Warner’s one-time brother-in-law, speaking from personal experience, the Warners’ ... distrusted the New York banks, they distrusted the eastern bankers, they distrusted Wall Street. They felt they were discriminated against just because they were Jewish.”

manageable fees of \$1,000 a week.¹⁷¹ At the same time, however, the brothers were empowered, owning their position as outsiders, producing films that challenged Hollywood's entertainment only motto. The brothers were "aggressive, cantankerous, and iconoclastic," willing to take risks when risks were needed, empowered by each other's support.¹⁷² Such was the case in 1926 when the brothers challenged the establishment by adding sound to films. The brothers embarked in a risky venture focused on the revitalization and evolution of film, and an invigoration of the Warner name and capabilities in both content and technological prowess. By 1927, the brother's gamble on sound began a new chapter for Hollywood while simultaneously encouraging assimilation via a popular and blatantly Jewish film, *The Jazz Singer*.

Under Harry's direction the brothers purchased a fifty percent interest in the Vitagraph Company which produced Vitaphone, a sound-on-disc system that synchronized sound to film, enabling the transformation of silent films to "talkies."¹⁷³ Although the brothers owed Sam for directing their collective interests to the film industry as well as the influence of his technical expertise in the "talkies" transition, it was Harry who saw the significance and necessity of adding sound. Harry risked the entirety of Warner Bros.

¹⁷¹ Thomson, 60. The first Rinty film, *Where the North Begins*, "was so cheap to make at an hour and it grossed \$300,000 in a weekend." Warner Bros. produced twenty-seven Rin Tin Tin films.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ "Early History of Warner Brothers as a partnership," Box 8, "Warner Bros. History," Folder 15494B Warner Bros. History. p 14-15, *WBA*. Initially, Mr. Walter Rich obtained the rights to an exclusive license with Western Electric for the creation of talking pictures, on May 27, 1925. The lease stipulated that Rich "demonstrate the commercial aspects for producing talking motion pictures and could arrange a satisfactory organization to finance the production and distribution thereof." Warner's acquired a fifty percent interest on June 20, 1925, provided he could provide the aforementioned results within nine months of its acquisition—a task that proved more difficult than imagined due largely to limitations in lighting, camera operations, recordings, and synchronization, to name a few.

finances and borrowed seven-million dollars at forty percent interest to acquire

Vitaphone.¹⁷⁴ As Harry summarized,

It was the music of the instrument that I saw that attracted me mostly and beyond that, I was attracted by the screen being used as our future education because through the screen, you could educate. What was impossible to do with the silent picture was possible to perform by this instrument.¹⁷⁵

Commercially, Vitaphone had the potential to eliminate the need for orchestras and stage productions used primarily in first-run theaters. This gave smaller theaters, of which the Warner brothers were primary owners, the ability to compete with the larger, deluxe motion picture houses. Furthermore, the recordings could be profitable in and of themselves through “score changes”—music selected from Warner’s catalogue would be recorded, and the film and music leased to the exhibitor and charged at a profit.¹⁷⁶

The use of new technology, however, was not without flaws and glitches, nor had these limitations failed to catch the attention of Warner Bros.’ Hollywood competitors, which were financially invested in the failure of sound synchronization. If sound was successful, silent films would become obsolete, forcing Hollywood studios to transition to sound, threatening financial loss of silent films already in production or awaiting distribution. By integrating sound, Warner Bros. forced other studio owners to question the power and possibility of film, becoming further alienated within Hollywood for “not letting well enough alone.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 23:30.

¹⁷⁵ Harry Warner quoted in Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 23:44. Harry also had the foresight to purchase the potential sound competition, Movietone, from Fox. A fortuitous decision, the newly acquired technology surpassed the technological abilities of Vitaphone, becoming Warner Bros. sole sound system.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 14. See also “Early History of Warner Brothers as a Partnership,” Box 8, Folder 15494B-Warner Bro History, 14, *WBA*.

¹⁷⁷ J. Warner quoted in Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 23:46. “It was the general belief at that time that motion pictures had progressed as far as they could go as a medium of dramatic expression and satisfying entertainment. My brothers and I believed otherwise. We were determined to break the barrier of silence

On August 6, 1926, Warner Bros. released its first official attempt at the integration of sound, *Don Juan* (1926). The process of synchronization proved tedious and difficult, prone to human error, as each synchronized sequence required precision of timing, distance, and proper placement of recording equipment.¹⁷⁸ Harry's risk was muted by Sam's direction. Rather than using Vitaphone for recording the living voice, *Don Juan's* synchronization was limited to sound of the 191 kisses made by lead actor John Barrymore, swords clashing, doors opening, glass shattering, and the orchestral accompaniment.¹⁷⁹ Commercially *Don Juan* was a success, increasing Warner Bros. value as a studio, raising the public's interest in their projects and ability, and elevating their standing in Hollywood. Despite the accolades, *Don Juan* failed to revolutionize the movie industry or WB's Studios.¹⁸⁰ Little changed.

Ultimately, *Don Juan* became just another film in Warner Bros.' catalogue—its opening sequence its highlight. The brothers opened *Don Juan* with a series of shorts that included a violin solo by the leader of the Philharmonic, a singing of *Pagliacci* by the principal tenor of the Metropolitan Opera, Giovanni Martinelli, and Al Jolson singing “Red, Red Robin (Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin’ Along). The possibilities of sound technology films intrigued audiences, but critics all but ignored the shorts.¹⁸¹ These

and bring full life to the screen by giving it a voice. To this goal, we dedicated the full resources of Warner Bros. There were setbacks and discouragements and a great deal of criticism from doubters who were annoyed with us for not letting well enough alone.”

¹⁷⁸ Thomson, 71; Warner-Sperling and Millner, 126. The problems described refer to the production of *The Jazz Singer*, but applied to the initial “talkies.” “The camera had to be soundproofed; the buzz in the Klieg lights was eliminated; the stage itself had to be a soundstage, devoid of noise; secret places were found for the microphones; and the camera and the skis were coordinated-coordinated...”

¹⁷⁹ Warner-Sperling, 26:54. Warner-Sperling and Millner, p 110.

¹⁸⁰ “Vitaphone,” <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/belknap/exhibit2002/vitaphone.htm> Retrieved September 15, 2017.

¹⁸¹ Freedland, 32-33. The brothers followed *Don Juan* with a series of shorts that included a violin solo by the leader of the Philharmonic, a singing of *Pagliacci* by the principal tenor of the Metropolitan Opera,

shorts, and the reaction to them, confirmed to Sam that a human connection, a human voice, would connect the audience to film. It would take a year, a film focused on the Jewish struggle for assimilation, and one brief impromptu line to revolutionize industry standards, elevate Warner Bros.' standing, and provide the impetus for what would become the brothers' trademark socio-political celluloid activism.

As the brothers delved into the possibilities of sound, rival studios awaited their demise. Citing *Don Juan* as proof that sound could not be successfully integrated to films, rival studios repeated their predictions that audiences would simply not gravitate toward it.¹⁸² This position was supported with the brother's decision to make a film adaptation of Samson Raphaelson's short story, "The Day of Atonement." Collectively, Hollywood's studio owners did not share the brothers' optimism regarding the success of a clearly "Jewish" film or the sustainability of sound films. On the contrary, competing studios predicted mainstream audiences would reject a film that focused on a Jewish man's struggles and desires, or one that relied heavily on Jewish themes, even with the integration of sound.¹⁸³ Sound was nothing more than a passing phase, a last-ditch effort for a struggling company; it simply could not last. To be certain, Warner Bros. rivals, Hollywood's Big Four—Famous Players-Lasky Corporation (eventually known as Paramount), Fox Film Corporation, Loew's Inc. (eventually known as Metro-Goldwyn-

Giovanni Martinelli, and Al Jolson singing "Red, Red Robin (Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along)—all of which succeeded with audiences, despite being overlooked by critics.

¹⁸² Michael Freedland, "You Ain't Heard Nothing Yet: The Moment Al Jolson Sounded the Birth of the Talkies," *The Guardian*, October 7, 2017. Retrieved November 8, 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/oct/07/how-al-jolson-jazz-singer-1927-changed-film-industry-forever>

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Mayer, MGM), and First National—united to prevent the conversion to sound, agreeing not to convert until all studios converted, stunting Vitaphone’s licensing potential.¹⁸⁴

The brother’s decision to produce *The Jazz Singer* as their second sound film was risky, both financially and socio-politically. The film required two versions, as less than one-hundred theaters were equipped to for Vitaphone technology. Technological limitations were only part of the cost of production that ballooned to nearly \$500,000, a cost so extreme that Harry Warner resorted to selling off his wife’s jewelry and relocating his family to a smaller apartment in an effort to finance the project.¹⁸⁵ The anti-Semitism of the banking industry exacerbated their financial situation, as bankers denied loans or forced the brothers to borrow at exorbitantly high rates.¹⁸⁶ Each brother dedicated heart, body, and soul to the project’s success. Nearly bankrupt, the company depended on *The Jazz Singer*’s success.

Beyond the financial constraints, *The Jazz Singer* integrated the brothers’ diverging assimilation interests. Before the production of *The Jazz Singer*, Warner Bros. produced a series of films that touched on Judaism while relying heavily on the dual themes of assimilation and patriotism, including *Your Best Friend* (1922), *Private Izzy Murphy* (1926), and *Sailor Izzy Murphy* (1927), all of which fell within the guideline of social and industry tolerance.¹⁸⁷ With the exception of *Your Best Friend*, each film featured George Jessel, a prominent Jewish vaudeville performer who functioned as a muse for the studio, playing a Jew who alters his Jewish background in an effort to win the heart of the

¹⁸⁴ Daseler; Douglas J Gomery, “The ‘Warner-Vitaphone Peril’: The American Film Industry Reacts to the Innovation of Sound.” *Journal of the University Film Association*, 28, no. 1 (Winter 1976): 11-19.

¹⁸⁵ Hugh Hart, “Oct. 6, 1927: The Jazz Singer Gives Movie Audiences the ‘Talkies’,” *Wired*, (Oct., 6, 2010), online <https://www.wired.com/2010/10/1006warner-bros-premieres-jazz-singer/>. Retrieved September 17, 2017. In 2010, the estimated cost of production was approximately \$5.3 million.

¹⁸⁶ Gabler, 132.

¹⁸⁷ Gabler, 140.

Gentile love interest—intermarriage signaling acceptance and assimilation into white society.¹⁸⁸

The production of Raphaelson's "The Day of Atonement" openly discussed and portrayed Judaism. For Harry, the project proved the logical extension to his devotion to Judaism, education, and assimilation and thus worthy of any potential backlash that he or the studio could potentially incur, as the film advanced religious tolerance and expressed of the American Jewish struggle with itself.¹⁸⁹ On a personal level, *The Jazz Singer* provided Harry an opportunity to include Benjamin in a consulting role, ensuring that the film utilized appropriate props and actors to convey the Jewish experience.¹⁹⁰ Benjamin that secured the casting of Yossele Rosenblatt as Cantor Rosenblatt as a connection to the Old World.¹⁹¹

For Sam and Jack, the project presented an opportunity to extend their version of assimilation, shifting Raphaelson's intended message of "inner torment" regarding the loss of the Jewish past to fit their desire for assimilation.¹⁹² As film historian David Weinberg noted, "the hero achieves success precisely because he rebels against his father's wish."¹⁹³ For Jack, *The Jazz Singer* represented of the Jewish desire "to

¹⁸⁸ *Private Izzy Murphy*, directed by Lloyd Bacon, (1926; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio); *Sailor Izzy Murphy*, directed by Henry Lehman (1927; 1926; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio). In *Private Izzy Murphy*, Jessel plays Isadore "Izzy" Goldberg, a Jew who changes his name to I. Patrick Murphy in his attempts to assimilate into an Irish neighborhood where his store is located, in addition to win the heart of his love interest Eileen Cohannigan. The sequel, *Sailor Izzy Murphy*, follows Izzy Goldberg's further attempts at assimilating as a perfume vendor who manages to save the life of Monsieur Jules, a millionaire perfume merchant, and his daughter, ultimately winning her affection.

¹⁸⁹ Gabler, 27.

¹⁹⁰ Goldman, 37

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Gabler, 29, 141; Goldman, 27, 29, 41.

¹⁹³ David Weinberg in Goldman, 40.

disassociate with one's ethnic enclave in an outward attempt at American socialization and assimilation"—the narrative of an entire generation.¹⁹⁴

Centered on the disjointed relationship between Jakie Rabinowitz (Al Jolson) and his father, Cantor Rabinowitz (Warner Oland), *The Jazz Singer* dramatizes the Jewish struggle to reconcile traditions and expectations of the Old World with the wants and desires of the New. The son of a cantor, Jakie is expected to carry on the generations-long tradition, becoming a cantor himself—a path that the elder Rabinowitz implements with an iron fist. Lured by jazz and ragtime music of the 1920s-1930s, Jakie flees his home after being physically assaulted by his father for singing jazz in a saloon, infuriated by Jakie's disloyalties to his family and religion. Unwilling to succumb to his father's wishes and violent tirades, Jakie seeks his own path, irrevocably altering the father-son relationship.

Ten years passed. Jakie successfully transforms himself into Jack Robin, an assimilated performer, after being "discovered" by a beautiful Gentile woman, Mary Dale (May McAvoy), while singing "Toot toot tootsie" in a restaurant. A vaudeville dancer, Mary assists Jack in securing the leading role in an upcoming Broadway musical, *April Follies*. Moved after attending a concert of sacred songs performed by Cantor Yosselle Rosenblatt (Cantor Josef Rosenblatt), Jack reaches out to his father on his sixtieth birthday. Unable to reconcile Jakie's betrayal against his faith, Cantor Robinowitz banishes Jack after another violent altercation, exclaiming, "I never want to see you again—you *jazz singer*!" On Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement, the Elder Rabinowitz soon falls seriously ill, the result of the tumultuous relationship with Jack.

¹⁹⁴ Goldman, 40.

Torn between the dueling religions of Judaism and show business, Jack is forced to choose between attending his opening night premier or singing Kol Nidre for his father. Jack's mother, Sara Rabinowitz (Eugenie Besserer), who functions as a touchstone for his past and source of strength, releases Jack to the world after hearing him sing in dress rehearsal, and leaves. After Mary informs Jack of his mother's departure, Jack realizes that he cannot deny his past and rushes to see his father. Hearing Jack sing Kol Nidre, Cantor Rabinowitz dies in peace. Despite missing the opening of *April Follies*, Jack perseveres in his chosen path, singing "Mammy" to his mother and girlfriend, reconciling the past and the present—becoming an American.

The Jazz Singer premiered October 6, 1927 to mixed reviews. Those privileged to watch the Vitaphone version, complete with the Al Jolson's singing and ad-libbed dialogue, met its premier with various standing ovations and, as *The New York Times* reported, the packed theater was disappointed only by the "fact that they could not call upon [Jolson] or his image at least for an encore."¹⁹⁵ Surrounded by chatter and the clinking of silverware, Al Jolson, as the jazz singer Jack Robins, exclaimed, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, I tell yer, you ain't heard nothing yet!" "Informally and spontaneously," he delighted audiences who felt they were overhearing a private conversation rather than seeing a film, wholly unaware that through their enthusiasm they were simultaneously participating in, and witnessing the demise of, silent film.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Mardaunt Hall, "The Screen; Al Jolson and the Vitaphone," *The New York Times* (October 7, 1927). Online <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9A01E0DC113FE03ABC4F53DFB667838C639EDE&mcubz=3> retrieved September 17, 2017.

¹⁹⁶ David Cook, quoted in "4 Trivia Questions about Cinema's First Talkie: The Jazz Singer," *Trivia Today Blog*, Retrieved November 8, 2017, online (<http://triviatoday.com/blog/article.asp?a=F4687A>)

Those that experienced the silent version missed the nuances of Jolson's "voice with a tear," leaving most audience members largely unimpressed or able to fully comprehend the significance of Warner brother's creation.¹⁹⁷ Like the Warner's critics and rivals, the magazine *Variety* questioned if those viewing the silent version would take to "the Jewish boy's problem of becoming a cantor or a stage luminary." While it was certain that the film would be a success in "Jewish neighborhoods," it questioned whether "a Jewish mother-son-religious story" would stand up without the assistance of Vitaphone.¹⁹⁸

Similarly, Raphaelson and Jewish viewers criticized Warner's decision to anesthetize the film version from the intended message, turning it instead into a film focused on the rejection of Judaism through assimilation.¹⁹⁹ Raphaelson disappointedly described the film as "distorted or broken up," claiming that the Warner brothers had turned his play turn into a "silly, maudlin, badly timed thing."²⁰⁰ Despite this criticism and obvious non-Vitaphone limitations, the Warner brothers and "talkies" had instantly, and simultaneously, arrived.

For the brothers', *The Jazz Singer's* impact was nothing short of a whirlwind. Its success elevated the Studios' standing from a second-rate studio on the outskirts of Sunset Boulevard to a member of Hollywood's "Big Five," complete with a new state of the art studio in Burbank, California.²⁰¹ Within two years Warner Bros. became self-contained—producing, distributing, and exhibiting motion pictures. The brothers expanded their business further by acquiring first and second-run theaters numbering in

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. See also <http://time.com/3457278/the-jazz-singer/>

¹⁹⁸ Sid Silverman, "The Jazz Singer," *Variety*, October 12, 1927. Online <http://variety.com/1927/film/reviews/the-jazz-singer-2-1200409985/> retrieved September 17, 2017.

¹⁹⁹ Goldman, 29, 42, 45. Quote provided by Arthur Herberg.

²⁰⁰ Robert L. Carringer (ed), *The Jazz Singer* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 20.

²⁰¹ "Early History of Warner Brothers as a partnership," Box 8, Folder 15494B, Warner Bros. History, 24. During the Golden Age of Hollywood, (1920s-1960s), *WBA*.

the hundreds, located in seventy-five cities in seven states. The Studio also acquired other businesses related to the motion picture industry—Continental Lithographing Company, Brunswick radio and record business, and several music publishing firms—diversification which assisted in the studios’ financial security during the 1930s.²⁰² Furthermore, the impact of *The Jazz Singer* motivated, if not forced, Warner Bros.’ rivals to create or adopt the technological advances initially provided by Vitaphone, at times unsuccessfully creating their own synchronization system.²⁰³

The brother’s willingness to take risks, putting their proverbial “tokhes afn tish,” (ass[es] on the table), prompted an evolution from exhibitors and “poverty row” production company, to a “Big Five” studio in just over two decades. They created an empire.²⁰⁴ Ignoring Hollywood’s production standards, and in spite of the anti-Semitism of the period, in 1929, *The Jazz Singer* was nominated, and subsequently won, its first Oscar, in the category of Technical Achievement.²⁰⁵ The first Oscar for the studio, it validated of the brothers’ achievements and recognized of the importance of sound.

The film’s accolades were numerous and the brothers’ investment, tremendous—socially, financially, and personally. Perhaps none invested more of themselves in the

²⁰² “Early History of Warner Brothers as a partnership,” Box 8, Folder 15494B, Warner Bros. History, 24-26, *WBA*. By the end of 1930, Warner Bros. had acquired approximately 539 theaters as well as control of First National Pictures (which included the consolidation of Stanley Theaters by 1932).

²⁰³ “Early History of Warner Brothers as a partnership,” History, Box 8, Folder 15494B, Warner Bros. History, 14-15, *WBA*. Initially, Mr. Walter Rich obtained the rights to an exclusive license with Western Electric for the creation of talking pictures, on May 27, 1925. The lease stipulated that Rich “demonstrate the commercial aspects for producing talking motion pictures and could arrange a satisfactory organization to finance the production and distribution thereof.” Warner’s acquired a fifty percent interest on June 20, 1925, provided he could provide the aforementioned results within nine months of its acquisition—a task that proved more difficult than imagined due largely to limitations in lighting, camera operations, recordings, and synchronization, to name a few. Despite Vitaphone’s success, by 1928, it would be replaced by Movietone, a sound-on-film system, proving more reliable, less cumbersome, and more economical.

²⁰⁴ Normal Lear in Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 23:42.

²⁰⁵ Warner-Sperling and Millner, 149.

film than youngest brother, Sam. At the age of forty, after suffering headaches for a prolonged period, Sam died from a cerebral hemorrhage. His dedication to *The Jazz Singer* motivated his refusal to seek medical attention, playing a direct role in his premature death. Sam died on October 5, 1927, the day before the film premiered.²⁰⁶ Only Albert was with Sam as he died, Jack and Harry were en-route from New York. Neither attended *The Jazz Singer's* premier. "The Jolson debut was an empty victory for us," Jack stated, "There is no doubt that *The Jazz Singer* killed him. Something wonderful went out of our lives."²⁰⁷

The Jazz Singer has been celebrated for its transformative influence on Hollywood technology, but the film's racism was not examined until the remaining brothers were no longer the driving force behind Warner Bros. Studios. The film perpetuated racist stereotypes of blacks through Jolson's use of blackface. Blackface mocked and berated blacks, while other forms of simplification and distortion of images, language, and movements accentuated their "otherness." In blackface, whites created their antithesis. Blacks lacked the opportunity to be presented as anything other than a caricature or image replete with stereotypes. As journalist and social commentator Michael Strausbaugh summarized in *Black Like You*, social norms restricted black actors, virtually eliminating the inclusion of African American actors in leading roles, relegating blacks actors to the role of "maids, cooks and manservants; kindly old Toms and Jemimas; sleepy, shuffling coons; pickaninnies, golliwogs and Topsies. Often they

²⁰⁶ "Early History of Warner Brothers as a partnership," Box 8, Folder 15494B, Warner Bros. History, 22, *WBA*.

²⁰⁷ Jack Warner in Thomson, 63.

danced and sang; just as often they donned leopard print loincloths and carried spears through fake jungles.”²⁰⁸ Many wore blackface.

For Hollywood Jewish moguls, who sought entrance and acceptance in white society, historian Michael Rogin argued in *Blackface, White Noise*, blackface represented inclusion.²⁰⁹ Through blackface, by adopting U.S. racism, Jews humiliated and degraded blacks in their quest for acceptance and assimilation. Through the perpetuation of racist stereotypes, Jews distanced themselves from blacks, pushing themselves ever closer to whites.²¹⁰ Furthermore, as in the case of Al Jolson’s character, Jack Robin, blackface made him indistinguishable as a Jew. Thus, early in their Americanization campaign, the brothers understood that acceptance into white mainstream society required mirroring.

The *Jazz Singer*’s significance superseded sound. Its success proved to the brothers that the U.S. public was open to entertaining a dialogue on the experiences and desires of its collective “others,” albeit one desensitized by Hollywood’s desire need to entertain and its moguls’ desire to belong. The film, centered on Jewish life, focused on predominantly Jewish characters and portrayed the American Jewish struggle for identity and inclusion in America. The *Jazz Singer* is a film rooted in patriotism. The film was blatantly Jewish and should have resulted in the rejection from mainstream U.S. society, particularly as the U.S. culture embraced discriminatory policies against Jewish

²⁰⁸ John Strausbaugh, *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult & Imitation in American Popular Culture* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2007), 229. Strausbaugh is a journalist and cultural commentator.

²⁰⁹ See also Michael Rogin, “Making America Home: Racial Masquerade and Ethnic Assimilation in the Transition to Talking Pictures.” in *The Journal of American History*, 79, no. 3, Discovering America: A Special Issue (Dec., 1992): 1050-1077.

²¹⁰ Rogin, *Blackface*, 89, 92. *The Jazz Singer*, Rogin summarized, “blacks out the non-Jewish group behind the black mask. ... The lips that speak Jack’s personal voice are caricatured, racist icons.” “[It] rises by putting on the mask of a group that must remain immobile, unassimilable and fixed at the bottom.”

“radicalism” and perceived Jewish immorality in American culture and arts.²¹¹ The U.S. public, however, embraced the film primarily because of its enduring message of belonging, the struggle of reconciling tradition and modernity, which extended beyond the Jewish experience.²¹²

The film discussed religion openly as part of the American experience. The film’s focus on Judaism bore great significance to the brothers who struggled to reconcile diverging definitions of what it meant to be an American and the role Judaism would play in their daily lives. *The Jazz Singer* brought to the screen an artistic rendition of the American Jewish struggle between maintaining tradition and the desire to assimilate. For the brothers, *The Jazz Singer* marked the beginning of a professional compromise that created an amalgam of tradition and assimilation, as well as Judaism and Americanism. They used it as the backdrop for a later drive that would redefine Hollywood’s role in American society and Jews within it.

Conclusion

With one phrase, “You ain’t heard nothing yet!,” the brothers promised a revolution, albeit an unintended and impromptu one, that few in Hollywood could have predicted or even understood at the time. Al Jolson’s phrase may have killed silent film, but unbeknownst to Jolson, it reawakened and confirmed Warner Bros. initial goal as a company—social awareness. One sentence signaled the beginning of a new chapter for Hollywood. Through *the Jazz Singer*, the Warner brothers ushered in Hollywood

²¹¹ Ibid., 29.

²¹² Musser, 215. “By putting on the mask of theater, Jack Robin/Jolson does not escape the defining issues of race, religion and ethnicity. Quite the opposite: he becomes immersed in it though what we might call backstage conviviality. Moreover, by putting on this mask and becoming part of America and its public culture, he enters into a world where the color line was (and is) a conflicted and pressing issue and where his identity as a Jew is triangulated and destabilized.”

activism, shaping Hollywood's Golden Age long before the rest of Hollywood realized its potential to voice and form social and political norms.

In the years that would follow, the brothers would again transform Hollywood—becoming the catalyst for celluloid activism as the first first-tier studio to critique bigotry, hatred and discrimination. At their core, Warner Bros. films were patriotic, stressing the need for unity, morality, and adherence to the democratic core values of tolerance, diversity, freedom, altruism, honesty, and unity. Of great personal significance to all of the brothers despite their ideological differences, their films functioned as stepping-stones towards assimilation and acceptance as Americans, rather than Jews. The brother's efforts ultimately expanded to American Jews in general. As a result, the Warner brothers alienated themselves from other Hollywood studios by providing ammunition for moral reformers who sought to silence and restrain Hollywood. Through it all, they remained, in the words of Groucho Marx, “the only studio with guts,” outcasts within Hollywood royalty.²¹³

²¹³ Hoberman and Shandler, 63.

Chapter Three

“We Do Not See Things as They Are; We See Things as We Are”: Warner Bros., Americanization, and the Reimagining of Democracy.²¹⁴

“[Warner Bros.] was ... the one outfit where it seemed possible that some boss was asking aloud, ‘Look, is this 1931, 1932, or whatever? So what are we saying about now? And what are we doing to make movies matter?’ If the country was in a crisis—and the idea was gaining ground—then shouldn’t movies be there for the emergency? It was part of this mood that Warner films seemed to move, talk, and shoot quicker than others”²¹⁵
- David Thompson

Following the unexpected and monumental success of *The Jazz Singer*, the Warner brothers entered into a new period of film production. Via Warner Bros. films produced between 1928 -1932, the brothers embarked in the second phase of an unofficial Americanization campaign criticizing the failures of U.S. democratic ideals. In their critique, the brothers initiated a redefining of Americanization. During this period, Warner Bros. initiated the production of films that melded patriotism, Harry’s version of U.S. idealism, and criticized the limitations of democracy.²¹⁶ By focusing on the marginalized citizens the brothers blurred the line between propaganda and entertainment. Yet, the brother’s diverging definitions of assimilation failed to take into account the cost of Americanization, particularly the loss of self in acceptance

²¹⁴ Often attributed to Anaïs Nin’s, *Seduction of the Minotaur* (1961), the adage has Talmudic roots dating back to 55b. Quoted by Rabbi Shemuel ben Nachmani, the adage was made in reference to the interpretation of dreams. See also G.T. Patrick, “The Psychology of Prejudice,” *Popular Science Monthly*, vol. 36 (March, 1890). “In the primary laws of knowing, above stated, we discover the ground principles of the psychology of prejudice. The results may be summed up in the form of two laws: 1. We see only so much of the world as we have apperceptive organs for seeing. 2. We see things not as they are but as we are—that is, we see the world not as it is, but as molded by the individual peculiarities of our minds.” Retrieved 3.23.19, Online https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Popular_Science_Monthly/Volume_36/March_1890/The_Psychology_of_Prejudice; Russel J. Webster, Donald A. Saucier, & Richard J. Harris, “Before the Measurement of Prejudice: Early Psychological and Sociological Papers on Prejudice,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 46, No. 3, (June, 2010), 305.

²¹⁵ Thomson, 77.

²¹⁶ Harry Warner defined democracy as a mixture of tolerance, diversity, freedom, altruism, honesty, and unity.

Defined by the rejection of the old in the creation of the new, abandoning the past in the hopes of acceptance in the future, Harry believed assimilation necessitated a loss of the individual. Harry, in particular, challenged this transition as contradictory to the democratic rights assured in the United States. Of particular importance were the freedom of choice, religion, opinion, and expression. Thus, Harry viewed assimilation, in and of itself, as insufficient if an individual was limited by predetermined terms of assimilation. He believed that the definition of an American had to change. For Harry, Warner Bros. socio-political films extended his undoubting drive as both Jew and American, his excitement and commitment for the U.S., and his self-appointed role as *the* celluloid soldier.²¹⁷ He sought to remedy America's ills through the creation of *his* idealized America, a tolerant, diverse, free and unified country.

Between 1929 and 1933, by challenging social norms such as repressive sexuality, and highlighting the detrimental effects of unjust economic, social, and judicial systems, the brothers sought to re-shape the system. Warner Bros. films of this period challenged what it meant to be an American by criticizing the nation's limitations. They desired to create a country that was inclusive of its diverse population and tolerant of individual cultures, beliefs, and religions. The brothers believed that acceptance of marginalized citizens would enable their entrance into white, mainstream, U.S. society through the careful intertwining of patriotism and democratic idealism.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Sheinbaum in Warner-Sperling, *Interviews*, 51:43.

²¹⁸ As a limitation of the period, the brothers, along with the majority of America's male population, failed to account for the limitations imposed on women. With few exceptions, Warner Bros. films centered on the male perspective with women perpetuating an antiquated role of second-class figures, subservient to their male counterpart. Men were to integrate, women would be incorporated as a result.

The brothers achieved this goal by producing films that challenged social norms. This included films such as *Scarlet Pages* (1930), *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932), *Black Fury* (1935), and the newly created gangster genre.²¹⁹ Acutely aware of their own marginalized status and the rise of anti-Semitic sentiment at home and abroad, the brothers carefully limited their Americanization campaign to critiques of democratic obstructions to whites. As a result, films under represented or omitted Jews, Blacks, and Asians, or depicted marginalized groups through racist caricatures. Often, white actors stood in for members of marginalized groups. Furthermore, the brother failed to create films that looked beyond the male perspective, maintaining the paternalistic status-quo. These representations placated the social norms and expectations of primarily white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant patrons. Furthermore, each film possessed a moralistic message regarding the U.S.'s ability to not only acknowledge its limitations, but its potential to learn from, and rectify them. The result was a whitewashed propaganda campaign that challenged and re-imagined U.S. democratic ideals, while succumbing to racism. Warner Bros. simultaneously praised and challenged U.S. democratic ideals in their quest to redefine America, and their place in it.

* * * * *

Warner Bros., Warner brothers, and Americanization

²¹⁹ *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, directed by Melvyn Leroy (1932; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio); *Black Fury*, directed by Michael Curtiz (1935; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio); *Scarlet Pages*, directed by Ray Enright (1930; First National Pictures).

“Hollywood,” biographer and historian Neal Gabler argued, “began with a paradox.”²²⁰ Founded by Eastern European Jews who “seemed to be anything but the quintessence of America,” Hollywood films crafted and presented the American dream. Marginalized by their religious background, Jewish moguls exuded their desire for acceptance by producing films that preached Americanization through the portrayed an idealized, accepting America.

Between 1930-1941, Hollywood moguls carefully crafted films that depicted Americans as primarily benevolent, white, and when necessary, underdogs—an extension of Jewish moguls’ personal backgrounds and self-image.²²¹ Problems were, generally speaking, limited in scope, optimistic, and resolved, happily, within two hours. Beyond patriotic plots and music, moguls’ Americanization tactics were as much as about content, as their lack thereof. As anti-Semitism and anti-Hollywoodism intensified, most Hollywood moguls eliminated questionable content, including the visual and thematic representation of Jews. This added to the ever-present omission of, limited, or humiliating portrayal of America’s marginalized groups on film. In other words, they sought social inclusion through film exclusion. Through these films, Jewish moguls attempted to pass as Americans, rather than Jews (as if the two were dichotomous).

The Warner brothers challenged this formula, within limits, by producing films that forced their viewers to question the plight of the marginalized, oppressed, or

²²⁰ Neal Gabler, “Behind the Scenes at Warner Brothers: Sound and Fury: The Making of the First Talkie, ‘*The Jazz Singer*,’ Is a Story of Jewish Heritage,” *LA Times*, July 31, 1988. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-07-31-tm-10751-story.html>

²²¹ *Hollywoodism*, 07:32; Couvares, *Hollywood*, 585. Paul Bern, Samuel Goldwyn’s, MGM, scenario writers, explains, sought out “real life” scenarios in small town newspapers in an effort to “reflect a reality about the movie industry and its relation to the market. To gauge the audience’s tastes and standards accurately was for the producers an objective both highly desirable and largely unattainable.” See also John Russel Taylor, *Strangers in Paradise: The Hollywood Émigrés, 1933-1950* (New York, NY: Holt, Reinhart and Wilson, 1983).

discriminated against.²²² During the late-teens and 1920's, the brothers' Americanization campaign centered on two themes: assimilation and patriotism. Warner Bros. first major socio-political production, *My Four Years in Germany* (1918), touted American benevolence and patriotism by highlighting German's brutality and animalism toward their victims amidst war.²²³ The film portrayed Germans as stereotypical "Huns," raping, killing, and brutalizing during the Great War, mirroring the United States' anti-war, anti-German sentiment.²²⁴ In their less than subtle description of the German Army and their overt pro-U.S. sentiment, *My Four Years in Germany* marked the brothers' first rudimentary attempt to develop their definition of Americanization.²²⁵ The film focused on the atrocities committed at the hands of America's enemies, as told by an American, and lacked commentary on the ramifications, or cause, of war. The film not only justified America's entrance into the Great War as propagators of peace and democracy, it validated discrimination against German-Americans, including Jews, committed in the U.S. during and after the European crisis. Furthermore, by stressing the crimes committed by Germans, the brothers advanced their assimilation directives, siding with the U.S. as patriotic Americans rather than Jewish others.

The brothers' depiction of assimilation also revolved around patriotism. Warner Bros. Studios, the only studio to produce films that blatantly focused on Jews and Judaism, presented assimilation as the goal for a series of its Jewish protagonists. During the 1920s, Warner Bros.' *Izzy* franchise and *The Jazz Singer* (1928) openly espoused Judaism

²²² *Hollywoodism*, 27:47, 42:13.

²²³ Welky, 327.

²²⁴ Gabler, 130-131.

²²⁵ *Beware!*, directed by William Nigh (1919; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio). *Beware!* argued that the Germans would again instigate war in their attempts to gain power and control.

and assimilation. In the films, the Jewish protagonists are always male, playing Jews (often in disguise) assimilating into mainstream society through relationships with Gentile women and rejection of their Judaic roots. A testament to the brothers conflicting definitions of assimilation, Judaism and its importance in American life was seldom simplified. The films depicted the weakening of Jewish ties as a moral crisis in which characters struggled with its loss in their evolution to a new, modern, man.²²⁶ What emerges is an Americanized version of the Warner brothers. These films expressed the brothers' belief in democratic ideals such as acceptance, freedom of choice, and the U.S.'s influence in the immigrant's rejection of the past. As in *The Jazz Singer*, the films' assimilationist messages resonated with patrons, who, like characters Jack Robins and "Izzy," saw a version of themselves struggling to reconcile the diverging paths of past and future.

Privately, the brothers were split on the definition of Americanism, how it incorporated assimilation, and the definition of success. Harry idealized assimilation as accepting of individual beliefs; he believed Americanization should be moral, diverse, and patriotic. Conversely, Jack believed assimilation necessitated the outright rejection of tradition and believed that acceptance enabled the exploitation of others in his quest for power and prestige. Both brothers defined assimilation through the masculine, capitalistic perspective that revolved around the acquisition of power, prestige, control, and security (financial and material). Harry and Jack accentuated the masculine differently.²²⁷

For Harry, assimilation required heteronormative patriarchy. Financial and personal security served as a means of taking care of the family, an obligation stressed by his

²²⁶ Because of the paternal system in which female Jewish life revolved, women seldom intermarried.

²²⁷ *Fortune*, 220.

father Benjamin.²²⁸ Money did not motivate Harry—duty, service, and family did. As his daughter, Betty, argued, money was secondary. “If he didn’t have a nickel, he wouldn’t be any different.”²²⁹ “Contributing to something,” Betty stressed, gave Harry “satisfaction” and “purpose”—“money was a perk.”²³⁰ Harry’s personal life was quiet, subdued, and grounded by the belief that family always came first.²³¹ Benjamin’s teachings on religion, morality, and family underscored the majority of Harry’s daily decisions.²³²

Harry and his wife Rea raised their children to understand the responsibility of privilege and wealth, and fragility of both. Hard work enabled their position and their position demanded great responsibility. Harry’s aspirations of success were rooted in his family. His responsibilities lay in instilling in his family, as well as his patrons, a moral framework. Assimilation and morality intertwined. He insisted his children attend public school, handout gifts to orphaned children, and learn to work the land, in order that they understand their good fortune and the hardships of life.²³³ Intimately acquainted with hardships and despair, Harry aspired to ingrain in his children the belief that they were no different than others, including the less fortunate—there was no “Them” and “You,” only

²²⁸ Gabler, 122.

²²⁹ Sheinbaum in Warner-Sperling, *Interviews*, 33:33, 33:55.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 32:46.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 11:49.

²³² *Hollywoodism*, 53:51-54:14. In an interview for the aforementioned film, Harry Warner’s daughter, Betty Warner Sheinbaum, states that she was not aware that she was a Jew until later in life. The claim that Harry hid his Judaic roots is challenging since Warner was not only active in the Jewish community, he attended Synagogue, spoke and read in Hebrew, and often spoke passionately of his Judaic roots. Contradicting this statement, in an interview with her daughter, film producer, Cass Warner-Sperling, Betty discussed her grandfather going to Temple as a clear indication of the family’s Judaic roots. What is more likely is that Judaism was not distinguished, but rather a way of life. See Warner-Sperling, *Interview*, 39:31.

²³³ Sheinbaum, in Warner-Sperling, *Interviews*, 36:07.

“Us.”²³⁴ “But for the Grace of God,” Harry would preach, they could have faced hardships beyond words.²³⁵ Professionally as well as privately, Harry’s principles dictated the terms of his life—a testament to his belief that being an American necessitated the whole, rather than a part, of the individual. Harry and Jack’s ambitions clearly differed.²³⁶

Unlike Harry, Jack rooted assimilation in patriarchal privileges, particularly those allowed white men possessing great wealth, power, and control. Like other Hollywood moguls, success provided a commodified, capitalistic existence, such as through the acquisition of clothing and other possessions. Where Harry hid from the limelight and the temptation that accompanied his position in Hollywood, Jack basked in it—eager to become wealthy, as money, according to him, was what counted to “a lot to people.”²³⁷ For Jack, success was insufficient. He had to impress a society that valued wealth. Jack flaunted his wealth to gain recognition outside of Hollywood and within white society. As a result, Jack disregarded relationships that failed to garner power and prestige. In particular, Jack discarded family, considering it a hindrance, “a threat, and intrusion, a burden” in his journey toward acceptance.²³⁸

Family could be ignored or overlooked in the creation of a person that embodied control and wealth. Jack aspired for the American ideal, the story that supported the self-made man which accompanied success and acceptance. Success provided comfort,

²³⁴ Ibid., 35:49. As the eldest of the Warner siblings, Harry was the only one to live through and recall the poverty, discrimination, and despair associated with the anti-Semitism Pogroms in Eastern Europe.

²³⁵ Ibid., 35:34.

²³⁶ Ibid., 28:23.

²³⁷ Ibid., 33:24; Birdwell, 6.

²³⁸ Gabler, 406.

prestige, and acceptance. Thus, money let him be “the kind of person he wanted.”²³⁹ The perpetual showman, Jack aspired for the very stardom that he controlled at Warner Bros. Studio. He sought attention, admiration, and acceptance. Success afforded Jack the luxury to be a person he wanted without the pitfalls of direct criticism. For Jack, assimilation represented the complete abandonment of the obligations of the past and the adoption of a new masculinity.

The new included a Gentile wife. In 1936, after divorcing his Jewish wife, Irma, Jack married his mistress, Ann Boyar, a Catholic woman sixteen years his junior—a trend adopted by many Jewish moguls in their journey toward assimilation.²⁴⁰ The acquisition of a Gentile wife symbolized a significant step in the transition toward acceptance in white society. In divorcing his Jewish wife, Jack was breaking from tradition, embracing the new while stepping away from Jack’s Jewish past. Jack’s divorce and second marriage further alienated him from an already fractured and fragile family. Significantly, Jack’s desperate need for acceptance as white also resulted the virtual abandonment of his only son, Jack Jr., choosing his new wife, and life, over his past. Jack Sr. later claimed that guilt motivated his decision to distance himself from his son, but his daily abuse toward Jack Jr. indicated a simplified explanation. Jack Sr. desired to exert his power over an individual he deemed less significant, whom he saw as a professional and familial threat in his new life.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Sheinbaum in Warner-Sperling, 33:32.

²⁴⁰ Gabler, 148-149; Cass Warner Sperling, *The Brothers Warner: The Intimate Story of a Hollywood Studio Family Dynasty*. (University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 207; Thomas, 7. Biographers of the Warner Bros. disagree on Boyar’s religious background. Gabler claims that she was a gentile—a Catholic from New Orleans, “as far remote from a Jewess as one could possibly be.”

²⁴¹ Warner-Sperling, *The Brothers Warner*, 215-16, 308. Other encounters between Jack Sr. and Jr. imply regret hindered by pride and resentment. See Gabler, 406; “Jack Warner Jr.; Film Producer, Son of Studio Co-Founder,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1995. Retrieved August 31, 2019. Available online at

Jack cheated constantly during both marriages, making few attempts to cloak his infidelity. An extension of his youthful desire for showmanship and belonging, Jack considered sexual conquest an extension of fame, success, and acceptance—whiteness. A misogynist, Jack viewed women as a perk and privilege to be used as he deemed fit. His position as Head of Production facilitated his sexual conquests, controlling female actors who were transformed into a sexualized commodity, passed from studio head to studio head, in their own quest for fame and stardom. As Marilyn Monroe recalled in her memoir, *My Story*, as an actress, “you sat with them, listening to their lies and schemes. And you saw Hollywood with their eyes—an overcrowded brothel, a merry-go-round with beds for horses.”²⁴² Studio heads, producers, and other power-wielding executives were involved in a criminal conspiracy. Complicit sexual predators, each “bed[ded] without abandon.” Their sexual conquests marked a turning point in their quest for assimilation and proof of recognition as “white.”²⁴³ Unlike Jack Warner and his fellow criminal moguls, Leo Frank was ultimately lynched in part for the perceived sexual assault of a white girl. As a man in power teetering between Jew and white, Jack made no attempts to hide the victimization of starlets, and suffered few, if any repercussions beyond earning the reputation as a womanizer and predator.

<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-04-03-mn-50277-story.html> Jack Sr. never notified his son of his decision to remove him from WB. Instead, Jack Jr. learned of his unemployment from Jack Sr.’s lawyer, as well as in trade newspapers. Jack Jr., Sr. claimed, had deliberately given the press the impression that he was dying following a car accident in the south of France. Their complicated relationship presented a different motivation. According to Jack Jr., “Said I’m terminated, as of then, and I will be paid for six months. And I said, “Why?” Then he took me aside and was like: “Every time he looks at you he sees Irma.” That’s my mother. They changed the locks, my name was gone. All, boom, like that. As I’m leaving, they’re putting up a sign over the main entrance that says, “Welcome back, Jack.” Both Irma and Jack Jr. were omitted from Jack Sr.’s autobiography, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*.

²⁴² Marilyn Monroe and Ben Hecht, *My Story* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade, 2007), 48.

²⁴³ Birdwell, 7.

Jack's sexual conquests confirm the fears of reformers who viewed Hollywood's "casting couch," a euphemism for the sexual exploitation of actors, as the source of the desecration of women's virtue at the hands of men. In addition, it was a point of contention between him and Harry. "Lacking the charisma of the stars," biographer Michael Birdwell summarized, "[Jack] used his position as studio chief to seduce a bevy of women, thereby spreading the notoriety of the casting couch. [He]... bragged about his conquests as if they were trophies," straining his relationship with his family, Birdwell continued, particularly Harry who believed family "was sacrosanct."²⁴⁴ Cash, prestige, power, and commodities, which for Jack included women, drove Jack in his quest for inclusion and his casting couch became a physical representation of white male entitlement and power.²⁴⁵

Vanity and power became tangible representations of assimilation for Jack. He was not above using religious responsibilities and family to enable sexual conquests. During Friday night observation of the Sabbath, for example, Jack used attendance to fulfill his own selfish desires. As Milton Sperling, a regular attendee and later Harry Warner's son-in-law recalled,

Sabbath dinner was his beard. He was diddling on the side, and my purpose for being there [at the Sabbath dinner] was to confirm, not only from his mother and father but from an outside source, that that is where he was.... When he'd take off, he'd say, "Remember, we were together tonight," in case his [first] wife, Irma, should ask.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Cari Beauchamp, "Without Lying Down: Francis Marion and the Powerful Women of Early Hollywood," quoted in Thelma Adams, "Casting-Couch Tactics Plagued Hollywood Long Before Harvey Weinstein," *Variety*. Online <https://variety.com/2017/film/features/casting-couch-hollywood-sexual-harassment-harvey-weinstein-1202589895/> Retrieved 9.10.2019.

²⁴⁶ Gabler, 148.

The struggle between the Harry and Jack's personalities, Neal Gabler summarized, lay between obligations and aspirations. The brothers were "energized by the very thing that tore them apart: the conflict between the old and the new, between Judaism and America." The struggle between Harry's "suffocating authority" and Jack's "brazen defiance," however detrimental to the personal dynamic, proved revolutionary professionally.²⁴⁷

The two personalities complimented and depended on each other insofar as the success of Warner Bros. was concerned. For better or for worse, the success of Warner Bros. films depended on the intermingling of diverging personalities.

Two coinciding events influenced the brothers' continued success: Warner Bros. leadership of the industry and the debilitating economic crisis of the 1929 stock market crash.²⁴⁸ While the former provided the brothers the foundation to create films of socio-political importance, the latter created the conditions from which the brothers drew inspiration for their commentary. The cultural crisis encouraged criticism of the limitations of U.S. democratic ideals (whom they favored and neglected), and encouraged an active discussion of what it meant to be an American.

Far from the industry royalty that Warner Bros. Studios became, the brother's humble origins as a "poverty row" studio made it (and them) first an annoyance and then, after 1928, a powerhouse. *The Jazz Singer's* success rattled Hollywood Jews for, by and large, Jewish moguls rejected their Judaic roots. They created an industry in which they hid in

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 150.

²⁴⁸ For more on Warner Bros. early history, diversification, and revenue" see "Early History of Warner Brothers as a Partnership," Box 8, Folder 15494B, Warner Bros. History, *WBA*; *Fortune*, 206; Impact on Sherman Act, *U.S. v. Paramount Pictures*, 334 U.S. 131 (1948). Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep334131/>; Dr. Harvey G. Cohen, Warner Bros. and Franklin Delano Roosevelt" Connection and Collaborations, *King's College Portal* (London, England: King's College London); Gabler, *LA Times*.

plain sight within the façade of “Main Street” America. They created a culture and American ideal that negated their existence as Jews, while desperately wanting to be part of the archetype they created.²⁴⁹ Many moguls abandoned their Jewish wives, marrying Gentile women as a symbol of assimilation and power, practiced Judaism in hiding, if ever. They hid their Judaic roots with flamboyantly patriotic productions that presented the U.S. as a one-dimensional entity. The brothers, in contrast, created films that stressed and highlighted both their Jewish roots and their allegiance to America. Warner Bros. films drew attention to Jewish moguls’ roots through the use of Judaic themes and imagery, such as that used in *The Jazz Singer*, as well as through the adoption of a style that enraged anti-Semites and anti-Hollywoodites, encouraging activism against Jewish influence in the creation of American culture. The brothers created films that endangered Hollywood Jewish mogul’s anonymity by criticizing the limitations of U.S. democracy and attempting to redefine what it meant to be an American.

The brothers thus were an anomaly within Hollywood—“they [were] neither in Hollywood nor of it.”²⁵⁰ As financial mentor Waddill Catchings summarized,

The film industry [was] a rat-in-the-corder industry. Developed late, its laws are rat eat rat. Under these laws the Warners (*sic*) have fought their way to the top against the opposition of the whole amusement world, which involves almost everybody from AT&T to Bette Davis. The fight has left its mark on the brothers. They have not lowered their guard.²⁵¹

More than any other Jewish mogul, Harry Warner understood the power and responsibility that film, and Hollywood as a creative entity, possessed. The disconnect

²⁴⁹ Francis G. Couvares, “Hollywood, Main Street, and the Church: Trying to Censor the Movies Before the Production Code.” *American Quarterly*, 44, no. 4, Special Issue: Hollywood, Censorship, and American Culture, (Dec., 1992), 584-616.

²⁵⁰ “Warner Bros.,” *Fortune*, December (1937), 111.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

between Warner Bros. and the rest of Hollywood largely resulted from the brothers' distrust of anyone outside of their familial circle, in addition to Harry's general disdain for an industry that failed to comprehend its immeasurable power for change. Film, Harry believed, was a weapon for change. Hollywood moguls had the privilege and responsibility to "use its bully pulpit for good," by idealizing the America that *he* loved and envisioned while reading the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.²⁵² As a collective, the brothers set personal animosities aside, trusting only each other as they determined the studios' direction. Indeed, they took criticism as confirmation that "they were on the right track."²⁵³ Based on this premise, by the end of the 1920s Warner Bros. film began a revolution.

Unlike other studios, Warner Bros. films challenged Hollywood's optimism. Under Harry's direction, Warner Bros. films demanded that its viewers see beyond themselves and their troubles, engaging them an American collective rooted in hope and patriotism, without the customary optimism of other Hollywood studios. Warner Bros. films broke from the entertainment only motto and appearance that consumed most Hollywood studios. The flash and grandeur of Hollywood films, complete with happy endings that illuminated a one-dimensional and singular perspective of life, were replaced with grit, simplicity, and reality that forced viewers to reassess the meaning of the American dream. Via films the brothers developed their own brand of patriotism. Warner Bros. films challenged and crafted an idealized America questioning the fulfillment of democracy and prompting reform that reflected their definition of an all-inclusive, fair, and just America. Integral to their Americanization goals, socio-political, or "problem,"

²⁵² Sheinbaum, in Warner-Sperling, *Interviews*, 50:52.

²⁵³ Cass Warner-Sperling in Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 1:20.

films became a Warner Bros. trademark.²⁵⁴ “The motion picture,” Harry said simply, “presents rights and wrong as the Bible does. By showing both right and wrong we teach the right.”²⁵⁵

Unlike other studios’ productions, Warner Bros. films exemplified a gritty realism influenced by headline news, the brother’s frugal nature, and Harry’s belief in the power of film.²⁵⁶ Unwilling to compete with other studios’ elaborate productions and star power, Warner Bros. films focused on the three-T’s: time, topic, and not typical. “Stories,” screenwriter Jerry Wald summarized, “became the stars.”²⁵⁷ Budgetary restrictions drove the distinctions that became iconic to Warner Bros. films, most significantly the use of unknown, “less attractive” actors who were “more down-to-earth, streetwise, and smart-mouthed.”²⁵⁸ Warner Bros. characters embodied rough characteristics. They spoke faster, were cloaked in modern dress. Furthermore, Warner Bros. films revolved around the alleviation of social ills through education.²⁵⁹ Sets were often recycled, films were

²⁵⁴ Roddick, 185.

²⁵⁵ *Fortune*, 220.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 111, 210; Record 944, Legacy 952, Reel 10-0975, 0993-0995; Record 943, Legacy 951, Reel 10-0991, *Flinders University, MPPDA Digital Archives*. Available online, <https://mppda.flinders.edu.au/>.

²⁵⁷ Gabler, 190; Roddick, 253.

²⁵⁸ *Fortune*, 110, 216, 218. The definition of attraction is based on the Hollywood standard. Daseler refers to the Warner Bros. actors as “castaways from one of Dickens’ bleaker novels,” in comparison to other studios’ actors “whose flawless features were perfectly proportioned for the grandeur of a fifty-foot screen.” Noting Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland, the Warner’s main exceptions. After 1933, with the departure of Darryl Zanuck, Warner Bros. lacked any full time producers, leaving the task to free-lancers, or “supervisors,” Jack, and Jack’s assistant, Hal Wallis. Zanuck’s departure will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. Ad hoc producers were referred to as “consultants.” They, unlike any other producers outside of WB Studios, were denied credits for their contributions on or off screen. See also Sheinbaum interview, Warner-Sperling, 47:30; *Fortune*, 218. According to Betty Warner Sheinbaum, Jack often displayed a lackadaisical approach to the studio, leaving his post for up to six months at a time. During this period his assistant, was in charge of the studio. Thus, it is difficult to tell who was responsible for many of the production decisions made on a day-to-day basis, despite Jack’s willingness to take responsibility for successful productions.

²⁵⁹ Gabler, *Empire*, 120; *Fortune*, 110. Darryl Zanuck was, initially, the exception. Zanuck worked for Warner Bros. until 1933, joining 20th Century Fox after heated financial disputes irreparably altered their relationship. See Letter to W. Hays from John M. Schenck, 20th Century Pictures, June 23, 1933, Record 933, Legacy 941, Reel 10-0853-0863, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital File*; Harry Warner to Hays,

produced in less time, used few *mise en scene* embellishments, resulting in an edgy, unique, gritty, and bleak, appearance.²⁶⁰

Before 1934, Warner Bros. films presented life in the U.S. not in black and white, but rather in shades of grey. Warner Bros. films were embedded with a resounding message of the limitations of U.S. democratic ideals. Moreover, those limitations are often intertwined with overwhelming optimism of the possibility for change and betterment. Warner Bros.' films stressed the possibilities of democracy by highlighting its limitations.

Characters that resonated with a vast majority of U.S. citizens served the brothers' assimilation goals. Warner's heroes and heroines were victims of, and proponents for, America and the democratic values for which it stood. They, like America, were flawed. They were real. Warner Bros. films depicted life honestly as a means of identifying with the audience. In keeping with their goal of assimilation, however, the brothers whitewashed their films, only presenting criticism of democratic limitations through a white, male, perspective. Problems, however, were universal. This is most prevalent in the newly created gangster genre of their own making.

Warner Bros. created artistic renditions of real-life gangsters, such as Al Capone, struggling with the economic depression and prohibition. Reiterating the brothers' Americanization goals, gangsters represent the marginalized citizen, forgotten, forced

Response to Zanuck and 20th Century Claims, June 9, 1933, Record 928, Legacy 936, Reel 10-0882-0888, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital File*; Letter from Hays to Schenck, June 9, 1933, Record 921, Legacy 929, Reel 10-0936, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital File*.

²⁶⁰ Doherty, *Hollywood and Hitler*, 313. Warner Bros. Film historians have largely attributed Warner Bros. "out-of-the-headlines" productions to Darryl Zanuck, arguing that he was instrumental in not only pitching their production, but also in creating their gritty feel. Although one cannot deny Zanuck's influence on Warner Bros., Harry ultimately green-lit films. No one production would have occurred without his approval. While Zanuck was responsible for their production, it was Harry's moralistic drive that facilitated Zanuck and his direction. The two were symbiotic.

into a life of crime. The gangster films provide a moral parable that reflect contemporary concerns, such as poverty and family, and how they influence the individual's place within society.²⁶¹ Gangsters were violent criminals with whom the audience could identify. In *Little Caesar* (1931), the lead, Rico Bandello, AKA "Little Caesar" (Edward G. Robinson), is not only obsessed with belonging, his desires to "be someone" results in the deterioration of relationships, particularly with women. Power and cultural respectability consume him, resulting in isolation, mistrust, and violence. He is outside of society, rather than within it. Ultimately, his ambition leads not to his rise, and to his fall.

Conversely, *The Public Enemy* (1931) depicts the story of Tom Powers (James Cagney), and is a cautionary tale of poverty and ambition. Unlike Rico, Tom maintains a relationship with his family, albeit a strained relationship due to his criminal bootlegging enterprise and his inability to reconcile diverging paths in the acquisition of status. While Tom has gravitated toward criminal endeavors, his brother Mike seeks out more traditional paths through education and gainful employment. The familial connection persists. Tom is a part of a social structure, drawn into a life of crime by poverty and necessity, while Rico "is a cold, ignorant, merciless figure driven on and on by his insatiable lust for power, a plaything of a force that is greater than himself."²⁶² Tom's ordinariness is relatable, as historian Roddick argues, "as a reflection of and on the problem of Depression America."²⁶³

Despite industry regulations, Warner Bros. films glorified criminals, not as villains, but as marginalized individuals within a broken system designed to criminalize. They, like

²⁶¹ Roddick, 104.

²⁶² Alden Whitman, "Edward G. Robinson, 79, Dies: His 'Little Caesar' Set a Style," *The New York Times*, (Jan 27, 1973), 1; Roddick, 106.

²⁶³ Roddick, 106.

women, prisoners, blacks, Jews and other minorities were the forgotten members of U.S. society—they are the focus of Warner Bros. films.²⁶⁴ They are representatives of a flawed system and the reason for reevaluation of democracy. As such, Warner Bros. films represented the U.S. at its best and its worst.

In *I Am A Prisoner of a Chain Gang* (1932), for example, the brothers provide a scathing commentary on the U.S. criminal justice system while simultaneously highlighting the will and determination of the American man. The two themes converge in a heartbreaking story that urges reform and promise through the will of the American spirit and the brutality of the criminal justice system. An adaptation from a book of the same title, *I am A Fugitive of a Chain Gang* depicts the true story of Robert E. Burns, a World War I veteran wrongfully accused of a robbery, sentenced to a decade of hard labor in Georgia's chain gang system. Penniless, unemployed, and desperate, James Allen (Paul Muni) is unable to find relief in a country torn apart by economic instability.

A symbol of America's past, Allen is a victim of the present—a man of integrity victimized by the limitations of a system unable, or unwilling, to recognize the struggles of the marginalized. A misunderstanding results in a robbery conviction that Allen vehemently denies. His time in the chain gang is brutal, complete with whippings for

²⁶⁴ Thompson, 79; Leo Braudy, "Entertainment or Propaganda," in Kaplan and Blakley, 28. Due largely to the social mores for the time, Jews and Blacks are represented in metaphors than through portrayals of active agents. In *I am A Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932), for example, Paul Muni's character depicts a man stigmatized by a single, minor, infraction, that prevents him from leading a normal life outside of chains and the brutality of a chain gang. A "remorsefully unfair system" dictates his life, prevents him from normalcy—a hunted man. Blacks are further represented as forgotten through blackface. As the forgotten man, theirs is an existence that is literally removed when the white man emerges. Jews, on the other hand, hide in plain sight. Actors who hide their beliefs for fear of reprisal, torment, or worse, associated as alien figures or blacks. Paul Muni, lead of *I am a Fugitive of a Chain Gang* played character of various as ethnicities in his career with WB's, including the following: Italian (*Scarface*, 1932), Mexican-American (*Bordertown*, 1935), Hungarian (*Black Fury*, 1935), French (*The Story of Louis Pasteur*, 1936; *The Life of Emile Zola*, 1936), Chinese (*The Good Earth*, 1937), and Mexican-Indian (*Juarez*, 1939).

minor infractions, including wiping a sweaty brow without permission. Overwhelmed by violence and injustice, Allen escapes, assuming a new life in Chicago under a false identity. Allen's success under his new identity soon results in blackmail, as a love interest forces him into marriage before turning him after discovering that he is in a new relationship. Allen turns himself in under a plea agreement, only to find that he has been betrayed by the justice system again. He is arrested and promptly escapes. As a result, Allen finds himself in the fringes, unable to work, a hunted fugitive left with few options for survival. He became the man that the system created, a good man whose only survival is supported by theft. The film ends in black following a bleak assessment of Allen's future. "How do you live?" he is asked, "I steal..."

In *Chain Gang*, Warner Bros. targeted a series of social ills, including economic injustices, unemployment, the plight of the war veteran, and an unfair justice system. It simultaneously aggrandized hard work, redemption, and integrity. Warner Bros. semi-documentary depictions of chain gang reverberated so fully among its audience that public outcry ultimately resulted in prison reform throughout the U.S.²⁶⁵ In addressing the limitations of the democratic system and highlighting the plight of the marginalized, the brothers violated the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) regulations against the depiction of violence toward peace officers, the aggrandizement of violence and the use of guns, in addition to other infractions.

Warner Bros. produced films that challenged Hollywood's identity and purpose, and simultaneously invited unwanted attention to Hollywood and its moguls' Jewish roots. Additional criticism stemmed from the brothers' approach to film. Rivals viewed Warner

²⁶⁵ Roddick, 124-125.

Bros.' style and activism as primal, distasteful, and irritating. Yet, as *Fortune* summarized, Warner Bros. films,

touch[ed] movie critics and fans on the nerve that had almost been atrophied by the average producer's chronic cynicism—the nerve that almost quickens to social issues...the only major studio that seems to know or care what is going on in America besides pearl-handled gunplay, sexual dalliance, and the giving of topcoats to comedy writers.²⁶⁶

While Hollywood's "first citizens" resented the brother's approach to film, audiences and many members of the industry praised them for their courage and activism. The brothers provided substance over flash, realism over glamour and in the process, presented America at its worse and hope for the future.

Americanization Amidst Anti-Semitism, Anti-Hollywoodism, and The Code

Warner Bros.' critique of America's limitations bore far reaching consequences. Other moguls, in particular, feared reprisal for Warner Bros. actions. During the 1920s, latent U.S. anti-Semitic sentiment intensified to become overt. Following the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, anti-Semitism resonated with xenophobes and anti-Semites who feared a communist uprising in the U.S. Communists became a euphemism for Jews, and vice versa. Other factors, including the economic depression, culture wars, the rise of fascist groups and nationalism at home and abroad, and Hollywood's resilience to economic collapse, focused unwanted and unwarranted attention on Hollywood's Jewish moguls.

By the 1930s, Hollywood Jews became targets of renewed attacks from primarily religious reformers who challenged the industry's legitimacy as curators of American culture and ideas. Hollywood moguls became the scapegoats during a period of political,

²⁶⁶ *Fortune*, 110. According to *Fortune*, MGM in particular believed Harry's "cut-rate dreaming" to be the "the worst formula for making pictures."

racial, and financial instability. As such, anti-Semites and anti-Hollywood watchdogs failed to recognize that Hollywood's Jewish moguls had already altered American culture, creating a new ideal rooted by their desire to assimilate into, rather than dismantle, U.S. society.

The Jazz Singer, in particular, yielded unwanted attention from moral reformers, anti-Semites, and anti-Hollywood watchdogs who argued that sound intensified and accelerated the moral degradation of virtuous movie-goers, especially the most vulnerable members of society— impressionable women and children.²⁶⁷ Unlike the nickelodeons and silent films that preceded it, audience members gravitated toward sound partly due to the intimacy it presented. A window to the human experience, sound drew audiences in, making them part of the experience, as if the audience was eaves dropping into a private conversation. Unlike silent films, “talkies” possessed the potential to influence through both dialogue and content. As Father Daniel A. Lord, co-author of the Production Code summarized, “Silent smut had been bad. Vocal smut cried to the censors for vengeance.”²⁶⁸ Sound thus renewed efforts from Anti-Hollywood/anti-Semites who feared the potential of film to influence change on an already susceptible audience, and riled up and increased resentment against an industry that many perceived as responsible for the degradation and perversion of U.S. values and morality.

Warner Bros.’ insistence on using film to fulfill their motto, “educate, enlighten, and entertain,” both heightened and confirmed these fears. The resulting unwanted attention

²⁶⁷ Couvares, *Hollywood*, 598; Francis G. Couvares, ed., *Movie Censorship and American Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian University Press, 1996); Garth Jowett, Ian Jarvie, and Kathryn Fuller, *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁶⁸ Father Daniel A. Lord quoted in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, 50.

threatened Jewish moguls' on-going attempts at assimilation. State-level reformers, Congress, and other media, including radio and books, targeted Hollywood Jews. No longer merely a perversion to moral and religious values, between 1928 and 1941 censors charged Hollywood Jews with endangering and corrupting the public and political health of the country.²⁶⁹

During the 1930s and 1940s anti-Semitism intensified as the “Jewish Question” became more prevalent in domestic and international conversation. Several factors accounted for this development, including the 1929 stock market crash and subsequent depression, political upheaval in the U.S. and Europe, Jewish socio-political prominence and visibility, and a general fear the unknown. As Americans sought the cause of increased economic hardships, they often targeted Jews—the result of anti-Semitic stereotypes that bound Jews to finances and other outlets of control, such as within government, banks, law firms, and the film industry. Anti-Semitic sentiment, however, varied throughout the U.S. The KKK, for example, echoing the anti-Semitism accentuated the two-year long Leo Frank trial (1913-1915), argued that Jews “procured [young women to] enhance their own monetary interests,” while Bostonians assaulted unsuspecting Jewish victims in “Jew hunts.”²⁷⁰

Anti-Hollywood anti-Semitism materialized further as Eastern European Jews became integral to the West Coast film industry's development and Hollywood grew as an American cultural phenomenon.²⁷¹ Anti-Semitic objections to Jewish influence on the

²⁶⁹ Steven J. Ross, “Reviewed work: *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History up to World War II*,” *Reviews in American History*, 30, No. 4 (Dec., 2002), 625.

²⁷⁰ Julian E. Zelizer, “Trump Needs to Demilitarize His Rhetoric,” *The Atlantic*, October 29, 2018.

²⁷¹ “A Brief History of Film Censorship,” *The National Coalition Against Censorship*, Retrieved Nov., 14, 2018. Online <https://ncac.org/resource/a-brief-history-of-film-censorship>. The WCTU initially focused

arts, particularly theater, easily transformed into anti-Hollywoodism.²⁷² Attempts to limit or discriminate against Jews' influence in films mimicked previous efforts, particularly through grassroot initiatives, advertisements in editorials, and other literature.²⁷³ These efforts stressed Jewish sexual prowess and immorality in addition to the degradation of culture at the hands of Jews.²⁷⁴ In particular, the satirical magazine, *Life*, perfected the racist caricature of the lustful Jew through anti-Semitic imagery that exaggerated Jewish physiognomy, appearance (or dress), money, and sexuality—a tactic that politicians and evangelists had employed in their own anti-Hollywood, anti-Communist, anti-Semitic drives during the 1920s-1930s.²⁷⁵

During this period, men of prominence, such as Henry Ford, Catholic priest Father Charles Coughlin, Charles Lindbergh, Senator Gerard Nye, William Dudley Pelley, and Fritz Kuhn inundated the U.S. public with anti-Semitic propaganda through radio, press, and public appearances.²⁷⁶ Anti-Semites blamed Jews for everything from the financial collapse, to labor strikes, to war. As historian Hasia Diner summarized, Jews “‘became the symbol of a world that was being manipulated and controlled. ... doing it in order to gain the twin-linked goodies of power and wealth.’”²⁷⁷ It was Ford’s assertion that, “Jew[s] plan[ned] to control the world, not by territorial acquisition, not by military

their anti-film campaign in 1906, condemning what they perceived as the negative influences of film. By 1914, condemnation escalated to sophisticated lobbying for government regulation against the film industry.

²⁷² Carr, 42.

²⁷³ For more on anti-Semitism association to literature, see Dobkowski.

²⁷⁴ Carr, 42.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 44, 51. *Life*’s editors qualified their depictions by expressing sympathy for “intelligent, intellectual and refined [Jews] in their suffering from the acts of the great majority of their race.” “Other” Jews were responsible for bringing anti-Semitism to the entire group.

²⁷⁶ See Max Wallace, *The American Axis: Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, and The Rise of the Third Reich* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2003).

²⁷⁷ Hasia Diner, In *American Experience: Henry Ford*, directed by Sarah Colt (2013; Arlington, VA: PBS International). Retrieved 3.10.19. Online <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/henryford-antisemitism/>.

aggression, not by governmental subjugation, but by control of the machinery of commerce and exchange.²⁷⁸

Through the 1920s and 1930s, Ford, an “ordinary racist with extraordinary resources,” used his personal periodical, *The Dearborn Independent*, to initiate, maintain, and support his claim of a Jewish conspiratorial take-over. Within a segment entitled *The International Jew*, Ford introduced Americans to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a forged and discredited account of a secretive Jewish plot to dominate the world through a series of catastrophic events, including war and economic collapse.²⁷⁹ Noted anti-Semite and personality, Father Coughlin also drew heavily on the *Protocols* while expressing his anti-Semitic views in his own periodical, *Social Justice*.²⁸⁰

Ford’s diatribes questioned Jewish influence on American culture from “Yiddish moron music” to Hollywood. As Ford summarized, “As soon as the Jews gained control

²⁷⁸ Ford quoted in Zelizer. For More on Ford, see Keith Sward, *The Legend of Henry Ford* (New York, NY: Russel and Russel, 1968); and Neil Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2001)

²⁷⁹ Victoria Saker Woeste, “Insecure Equality: Louis Marshall, Henry Ford, and the Problem of Defamatory Antisemitism, 1920-1929,” *The Journal of American History*, 91, no. 3 (Dec., 2004), 883; Dobkowski, 196-200. On May 22, 1920, *The Dearborn Independent* launched the first segment of its anti-Semitic series, “The International Jew.” Its purpose was to reveal to its readers the role of Jews in international affairs. The series ran for nearly two years, publishing ninety articles. *The Dearborn Independent* published its final issue on December 31, 1927, following a public apology in which he claimed innocence of the prejudice he was disseminating. “To my great regret, I have learned that Jews...resent this publication as promoting anti-Semitism.”

²⁸⁰ See Albin Krebs, “Charles Coughlin, 30’s “Radio Priest,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 1979. Jewish Virtual Library, “Father E. Coughlin,” online at <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/10/28/archives/charles-coughlin-30s-radio-priest-dies-fiery-sermons-stirred-furor.html>. Revered by his listeners, Coughlin, like Ford, used his private press, *Social Justice*, along with radio, personal appearances, to popularize hate. Spreading anti-Communist propaganda that incorporated Jews (leadership and institutions), President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) and the so-called “Jew Deal,” and countless other “enemies,” Coughlin amended his anti-Semitic diatribe, incorporating it into a much larger “Judeo-Bolshevik threat” focused on the destruction of Christianity. In the US, Coughlin maintained his popularity throughout the 1930s and persisted until the US entered the second European conflict. His anti-war stance proved his ultimate undoing. Preaching anti-war isolationist ideals after Pear Harbor, Coughlin seemed destined for a sedition trial, ending his political activism. See Donald Warren, *Radio Priest: Charles Coughlin, The Father of Hate Radio* (New York: NY: The Free Press, 1996), 235-44. Like Ford, Hitler praised Coughlin. Where Ford received the Grand Cross of the Supreme Order in 1938, Coughlin received indirect funding from Nazi Germany.

of the ‘movies’ we had a problem. ...It is the peculiar genius of that race to create problems of a moral character in whatever business they achieve a majority.” “Semitic” producers, Ford claimed “[did not] know how filthy their stuff is—it is so natural to them,” since Jews used their “cleverness” to “camouflage the moral filth” of “the monkey talk, jungle spells grunts and squeaks and gasps” of African American culture.²⁸¹

Ford and Coughlin’s prominence in the U.S. elevated them to the position of experts, their rhetoric legitimized by their prominence. Moreover, few Jews were in the position to challenge Ford, or desired the social and discriminatory consequences. The echoes of the Leo Frank case continued.

Further anti-Semitic attacks emerged from members of the isolationist movement, particularly Senator Gerard Nye and American hero Charles Lindbergh. Lindbergh, who had become enamored with the “vitality” of Germany, believed Jews posed a significant danger to the United States and democracy as a whole. He argued that, “the Jewish race” posed the “greatest danger to this country...in their large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio, and our government.”²⁸² An ardent isolationist and anti-Semite, Lindbergh referred to Jews as “other people,” and argued that “leaders of the Jewish race [were] not American in interests and viewpoints.”²⁸³

²⁸¹ “Baring The Heart of Hollywood: The Truth About the Motion Pictures,” *Dearborn Independent*, 29 October-10 December 1921; *The International Jew* (Dearborn, 1920-22), Vol. 2, p. 117-26, Vol. 3, p 64-87; and Vol. 4, p 7-41. Quoted in Brackman, 2. See also, “Jewish Supremacy in Motion Picture World,” *Dearborn Independent*, February 19, 1921. A series of articles entitled ‘Baring the Heart of Hollywood,’ appeared later that year, further critiquing the Jewish involvement within the film industry.

²⁸² Charles Lindbergh, America First Committee Rally, Des Moines Speech, September 11, 1941. According to Lindbergh, the two additional threats were the government and the British. For more on Lindbergh’s views, see Charles A Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles Lindbergh* (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1970).

²⁸³ Hal Derner, “The Lindbergh's and the Jews,” *Jewish Frontier*, LXVIII, no. 4 (Fall 2001), online http://www.ameinu.net/frontier/jf_sum-fall-01_derner.html.

Jewish loyalty to America became a central theme in both isolationist and anti-Semitic rhetoric. As America's entrance into the second European conflict seemed inevitable, Jews became easy targets, particularly as news of Jewish persecution in Germany seeped into media and culture. Many U.S. citizens considered Jews incapable of being loyal Americans due largely to a mixture of the anti-Semitic belief in Jews' innate desire and need to conquer and control, and their desire to assist their Jewish brethren in Nazi Germany. Some, including Senator Gerald Nye, argued that Jewish loyalty was always with Jews. Nye insisted that Jews, whom he dubbed "merchants of death," were intrinsically associated with the creation of pro-war propaganda. Although Nye initially focused on "industrial and commercial organizations engaged in the manufacture of or traffic in arms, ammunitions, or other implements of war," by the 1930s Hollywood Jews were brought into the fray.²⁸⁴

Nye's insistence of a Jewish conspiracy became instrumental in the development of the Senate Propaganda hearings of late 1941, and the creation of the America First organization, both focused on Hollywood Jews as "war mongers" intent on "rousing war fever."²⁸⁵ According to Nye, Jews utilized whatever means necessary to enhance their position, particularly the instigation of war. A known anti-Semite and isolationist, Nye believed Hollywood Jews "war-mongering." In these accusations, Warner Bros. bore

²⁸⁴ Report of the Special Committee on Investigation of the Munitions Industry (Nye Report), US Congress, Senate, 74th Congress, 2nd seas., February 24, 1936, p 3-13. Online <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/nye.htm> Retrieved June 28, 2019; Carr, 63. Senator Gerald Nye of North Dakota headed the investigation against the armaments industry which aided in his claim that a deliberate connection existed between the public relations campaign that "fanned" anti-German sentiment, pushing the United States into war, resulting in the maximizing of arms industry profits. This would not be Nye's first inquisition against Hollywood. In 1941 he would help spearhead an investigation against Jewish Hollywood mogul based on the same claims in relation to World War II.

²⁸⁵ Gerard P. Nye, "War Propaganda: Our Madness Increases as Our Emergency Shrinks," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. 7, (September 15, 1941), 720-21; Steven Vaughn, *Ronald Reagan in Hollywood: Movies and Politics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 93.

special significance due largely to Harry Warner's unapologetic association Judaism, constant circumventing of censorship regulations, and Warner Bros. insistence on questioning, and later redefining of U.S. democracy. As Nye stated in reference to Hollywood moguls,

Those primarily responsible for the propaganda pictures are born abroad. They came to our land and took citizenship here entertaining violent animosities toward certain causes abroad. Quite natural is their feeling and desire to aid those who are at war against the causes which so naturally antagonize them. If they lose sight of what some Americans might call the first interests of America in times like these, I can excuse them. But their prejudices by no means necessitate our closing our eyes to these interests and refraining from any undertaking to correct their error.²⁸⁶

Nye, like other like-minded individuals, failed to fully comprehend the extent which Hollywood Jews dedicated themselves to America and American ideals. To paraphrase Neal Gabler, Hollywood Jews created the idealized American dream, often at a detriment, or complete abandonment, of their past. As attacks on Hollywood intensified, Hollywood moguls did not sit idly.

Beginning in 1922, Hollywood moguls had begun a decades long period of self-imposed reform. Focused primarily on improving Hollywood's public image and securing acceptance by mainstream America, with the additional benefit of securing their financial bottom line, studio moguls instituted a two-tiered system of censorship and regulation that included the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) (1922), and its subsidiary, the Production Code Administration (PCA) (1934). Both agencies industry shared the same simple goal: to set forth, and enforce, standards

²⁸⁶ Propaganda, 11-12.

in film production and content. These combined efforts, Hollywood Jewish moguls hoped, would bestow the legitimacy.²⁸⁷

The MPPDA was the logical, and necessary, culmination of approximately two decades of ad-hoc industry, state, and federal regulations aimed at censoring content and limiting film distribution.²⁸⁸ Via an industry sponsored regulatory agency, the film industry hoped it would stave off unwanted attention from anti-Semites, reformers, anti-Hollywoodites, and further intervention from the federal government.²⁸⁹ Like its predecessors, particularly the National Board of Review (NBR), the MPPDA regulated film references to “sensual kissing over three seconds in duration, nudity, birth control, abortion, drunkenness, drug use, prostitution, profanity, criminal modus operandi, and

²⁸⁷ Couvares, *Hollywood*, 587, 593, 607.

²⁸⁸ Wilton A. Barrett, “The Work of the National Board of Review,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 175; Nancy J Rosenbloom, “Between Reform and Regulation: The Struggle Over Film Censorship in Progressive America, 1909-1922,” *Film History*, 1, No. 4, (1987), 308; Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown), 1976, 74-138; Robert Sklar, *Movie Made America* (New York, New York: Random House), 1975, 30-32; Richard S. Randall, *Censorship of the Movies: The Social and Political Control of a Mass Medium* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press), 1968; Lary May, *Screening out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1980, 43-59. Efforts to control the film industry began in earnest in the early 1900s, during its infancy as a New York based institution controlled largely by members of the Motion Picture Patents Company (MMPC), or Edison Trust—Edison, Vitagraph, Essanay, Selig Polyscope, Lubin Manufacturing, Kalem Company, Star Film Paris, and American Pathé. Instigated by grassroot movements led by anti-moving picture activists and reformers, such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), initial regulations focused on the film industry as a means of censoring films of questionable material that appeared to pander to immigrants and deviants, influenced the masses negatively, and dismantled the virtuous order of family by tainting the morals of impressionable youth. The WCTU initially focused their anti-film campaign in 1906, condemning what they perceived as the negative influences of film. By 1914, condemnation escalated to sophisticated lobbying for government regulation against the film industry.

²⁸⁹ *Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio*, 236 U.S. 230, No. 456 (Decided: February 23, 1915). Available <http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/236/230.html> (retrieved 12.20.15). See also Barbara Hall and Val Almendarez, “Hollywood and the Production Code,” *History of Cinema Series 1: Hollywood and the Production Code*, Margaret Herrick Library, <http://microformguides.gale.com/Data/Introductions/32730FM.html>; Welky, 57-58; Carr, 62-63. Connecticut’s commissioner designated the “immoral” and/or “liable to offend racial or religious feelings” in *Film Corp. v. Turnbull*. See also *Weber v. Freed*, 239 U.S. 325, No. 644 (Decided: December 12, 1915), available <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/239/325/> (Retrieved 12.27.15).

gunplay,” in addition to pregnancies or smoking.²⁹⁰ Headed by William Harrison Hays, former Post-Master General under the Harding administration, former chair of the Republican National Committee and a Presbyterian, the MPPDA provided Hollywood Jewish moguls’ protection and respectability. Under Hays the MPPDA helped to thwart, if only temporarily, Hollywood’s image of Jewish clannishness, and replaced it propriety and conformity.

Hays’ primary task was to maintain the film industry’s interests while placating governmental and religious groups. He had to ensure, or at the very least give the illusion, that Hollywood complied with state and federal regulations, while providing security for the film industry. Thus, Hays liaised between competing agencies, each vying for influence on American culture and the ideals it promoted. Hays was placed in the impossible position of serving multiple masters. His loyalty, however, went to the film industry.

The head to an agency entrusted with the regulation of an industry motivated by respectability and acceptance, Hays exuded authority but lacked the ability to enforce the MPPDA’s guidelines covered in “the Formula” (1924), the Advertising Code and Resolution for Uniform Interpretation (1924), and the “Don’ts and Be Carefuls” (1927).²⁹¹ Varying restrictions requested by individual state censoring agencies further

²⁹⁰ “Censorship Of Moving Pictures,” *Burlington Free Press*, (Feb. 19, 1921), 5; Geltzer, 2.

²⁹¹ “Don’ts and Be Carefuls,” May 24, 1927, Record 341, Reel 3, Legacy 341, 3-1232-1234, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital Archives*. The “Don’ts and be Carefuls” consisted of the following guidelines, each of which had been “habitually condemned by censoring boards in this country and abroad but more importantly that audiences observing them in non-censorship states and countries are aroused to demands of censorship.” The Don’t included: 1. Profanity (the words “God, Gawd, Lord, Jesus Christ...Hell, S.O.B., damn, and every other profane and vulgar expression however it might be spelled”); 2. The nude (defined as “the exposure of any part of the body which is not normally covered by a bathing suit”); 3. The illegal traffic or actual using of drugs; 4. Any inference of sex (*sic*) perversion; 5. Titles or scenes which willfully ridicule law enforcement; 6. White Slavery;

complicated Hay's task. While federal and state censorship boards mandated that Hollywood could only create films for the purpose of entertainment (of which few ever agreed on the definition and limitations), and while its content was closely controlled, each state defined the guidelines of entertainment loosely, and studios were not mandated to follow the MPPDA guidelines. Instead, studios followed the aforementioned regulations only on a volunteer basis.²⁹² Despite influencing nearly every facet of the motion picture industry, including source materials for screenplays, content, and advertisement, the MPPDA possessed little ability to enforce regulatory guidelines (including those of its own creation), and lacked follow-through and consistency.²⁹³ Infractions lacked punishment and Hays was essentially powerless to force studios to comply with the regulations they themselves helped to create.

Warner Bros. pushed the limits of Hays ineffectual management, simultaneously angering rivals and reformers alike. In their critique of America's limitation and their assimilationist drive, the brothers personally and callously disregarded regulatory agencies, including the MPPDA, in the production of films. They did this despite the fact

7. Miscegenation; 8. Excessive, lustful kissing, particularly when one character or the other is a "heavy"; 9. Sex hygiene and venereal diseases; 10. Scenes of actual childbirth; 11. Children's sex organs; 12. Ridicule of the clergy; 13. Wilful offense to any nation, race or creed. Be Carefuls required "great care" in the manner the following were treated: 1. The use of the Flag; 2. International relations; 3. Religion and religious ceremonies; 4. Arson; 5. The use of firearms; 6. Theft, robbery, etc ...; 7. Brutality and possible gruesomeness; 8. Technique of committing murder by whatever method; 9. Methods of smuggling; 10. Third Degree methods; 11. Actual hangings and electrocutions (as legal punishment for crime); 12. Sympathy for criminals; 13. Attitude toward public characters and institutions; 14. Sedition; 15. Apparent cruelty to children and animals; 16. Branding of people or animals; 17. The sale of women, or women selling her virtue; 18. Rape or attempted rape; 19. First night scenes; 20. Man and woman in bed together, 21. Deliberate seduction of girls; 22. the institution of marriage; 23. Surgical operations.

²⁹² Although Hollywood moguls helped create the MPPDA, membership was voluntary, thus non-members did not have to abide by the standards.

²⁹³ Couvares, *Hollywood*, 586, 591, 593. This is not to say that Warner Bros. was the only studio to circumvent the regulations set forth by the MPPDA and the various codes. On the contrary, lacking any ability to enforce the aforementioned codes, every signatory studio used the code for their own benefit. Continued outcry by both Protestant and Catholic reformers, citing the MPPDA's lack of enforceability, forced Hays to create a subsidiary of the MPPDA, the PCA.

that Jack was a creator, signatory, and MPPDA Board member. Harry was not above manipulating the studio system and the MPPDA in an effort to improve Warner Bros.’ bottom line and Americanization agenda. Warner Bros. films used sex, manipulation and deception to sell democratic ideals and “B” movies—a strategy motivated by ideology and finances. These tactics often drew unwanted attention from critics and rivals. Until the later forced adoption of the Code, Harry used the MPPDA, PCA, and William Hays to settle rivalries, contract disputes and maintain sovereignty on the production of “questionable” advertising material.

The brothers often failed to adhere to the regulations, feigning ignorance of their existence, often while simultaneously drawing attention to rivals for similar violations.²⁹⁴ Such was the case when MGM obtained the rights to the “condemned” play *The Green Hat*. Rewritten and advertised in 1928 as *A Woman of Affairs*, Harry was quick to report MGM’s violation to Hays, commenting that such acts and subsequent advertisements were, in his opinion, “the biggest joke [he had] ever heard of.” Actively mocking Hays and the MPPDA, Harry questioned the role of both asking,

Why beat around the bush? If you are going to allow plays to be made from any condemned book, why not do it openly and any way the producer sees fit, because in that way, he may only hurt his own company and by using a ruse, he is hurting the business in its entirety.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ “Memorandum Between the Author’s League of America, The Dramatists’ Guild of the Authors League, the Author’s Guild of the Author’s League and the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc.” *Flinders University MPPDA Digital Archive*, Record 1304, Legacy 1315-1929, Reel 6, 922-923 (Dec. 15, 1927). Drafted in 1924, “The Formula” stipulated the following regarding “rejecting salacious books and plays”: “When any company member of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., is offered the screen rights to a book or play of questionable nature its representatives inform the offices of that Association; and if the judgment of the member company to the effect that the picturization of the subject is inadvisable is confirmed, a notice is sent to all the other member companies giving the name of the objectionable book or play; and such company members this having their attention directed to the subject in question have the opportunity of avoiding the picturization of the novel or play.”

²⁹⁵ Letter to William Hays from Harry Warner regarding condemned plays and books, Record 514, Legacy 517, Reel 6_0926 (January 4, 1929), *Flinders University MPPDA Digital Archive*. For additional correspondence from Hollywood to Hays regarding condemned materials, see Record 1304, Legacy 1315-

Continued production of “questionable” material by rival studios prompted Harry to lash out against Hays, and what he perceived as the ineptitude of the Hays Office.

You know that our company has always been in accord with you to help develop higher standards in the motion picture industry, but we cannot afford to sit idly by and allow other companies to do things that destroy us. As I have explained to you at various times, unless you can get the members to adhere to the rules and regulations that they agree to, it is my intention to go them one better—not for the purpose of just ‘going them one better’ but for the purpose of bringing forcefully to your attention these wrongs.²⁹⁶

Warner Bros. consistently ignored the rules Harry demanded Hays enforce. In 1930, when Warner Bros. failed to adhere to regulations on the production of *Kismet*, *Honolulu*, and *Nancy of Naples*, Jack and Harry coordinated their responses. In their response to the violations, Harry and Jack feigned ignorance, blamed others for any violations, pretended they were never informed of the regulations, claimed confusion about the requirement to submit copy for review, questioned why the content would be considered questionable to begin with, or simply failed to respond to Hays’ correspondence.²⁹⁷ The brothers applied similar tactics to requests to change the title of an upcoming, and yet unscreened, film, *Woman Hungry*, as well as to the salacious advertising campaign for WB’s “Sex-Appeal

1929, Reel 6, Records 912-928, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital Archive*; Admittedly Jack attempted to sell Harry on the idea of purchasing the rights to a “condemned” play. Harry responded by arguing that, if Warner Bros.’ survival was based on the production of films based on condemned plays, “I would rather get out of the business.”; Hays to the Warner Bros Re: Sextette (Aug. 8, 1930), Record 705, Legacy 713, Reel 9-0827-0830, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital Archive*.

²⁹⁶ Letter to William Hays from Harry Warner, (March 10, 1933) Record 886, Legacy 894, Reel 10-626, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital Archives*.

²⁹⁷ Correspondence Regarding Warner Bros. Failure to Adhere to MPPDA Regulations, Record 705, Legacy 713, Reel 9-813, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital Archives*. Warner Bros. Sextette triple feature included the following titles: *A Soldier’s Plaything*, *The Matrimonial Bed*, and *A Husband’s Privileges*. Each film included a scantily clad woman dressed either in lingerie or other sexy attire; See also, Correspondence from Harry Warner to William Hays, Reel 9_0818 (October 15, 1930). Jack Warner to W. Hays, October 29, 1930, Record 705, Legacy 713, Reel 09-0815, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital Archives*; Hays to Jack regarding the submission of scripts to review, Oct. 24, 1930, Record 705, Legacy 713, Reel 09-0816-0829, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital Archives*.

Sextette” (1930).²⁹⁸ In his response to Hays’ requests to tone down or eliminate the sexualized promotions, Harry exuded ignorance asking, “Are our ads so objectionable that you have been receiving complaints about them?...If there are any other ads in particular that you refer to, I would appreciate your calling them to my attention.” Sexualized advertisement continued.²⁹⁹

Outcry regarding Warner Bros. defiance of the Resolution equated its advertisements with the deterioration of morality and good taste. Herbert Kaufman argued to Hays that Warner Bros. advertisements “will strengthen the impression that the movies are again unlocking the bedroom door and generally loosening the bridle on general expression and situation.” Furthermore, Kaufman continued, “To accept their measure of American intelligence, chastity and character, leaves no alternative but to assume that American womanhood is a prostitute at heart and that the primary interest of the average husband, son and brother lies in the area of seduction, adultery and woman chasing.”³⁰⁰ *The Houston Chronicle* raised similar objections to the sexualized nature of the Warner Bros.’ *Sextette*, questioning not only Warner Bros. motives, but also Hays’s inaction and limited influence over the industry he was hired to control.

The manner in which Warners (*sic*) have seen fit to advertise their wares, not to the public but to ‘the trade,’ furnishes us illuminating evidence of what’s wrong with the movies. And leads us to the conclusion that Brother Will Hays is using

²⁹⁸ Warner Bros. *Sextette* Advertisement, June 25, 1930, Record 705, Legacy 713, Reel 0-0831-0834, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital File*. The brothers used sex to sell B movies, low-budget films intended as second features for feature film. In this case, the films within the *Sextette* were originally intended as silent films, and were later re-dubbed to include sound. The result was a mixture of bad acting, and lack of plot.

²⁹⁹ Letter from Harry Warner to William Hays, Oct., 15, 1930, Record 705, Legacy 713, Reel 9-0820, *Flinders University MPPDA Digital File*

³⁰⁰ Letter to William Hays from Herbert Kaufman, October 30, 1930, Record 1276, Legacy 1287, Reel 9_0809-9_0812, *MPPDA Digital Archive* Underline original. Kaufman’s correspondence referred to *Kismet* only.

an air rifle to bring down an elephant when he tries to interpret the movie magnates to America and America to movie magnates.³⁰¹

Criticism failed to impact the brothers. In promoting the film *Scarlet Pages* (1930), the brothers relied on sexual innuendo to sell their moralistic message. The advertising tagline, “WOMENT LOVE BUT ONCE—AFTER THAT THEY JUST KEEP PRACTICING—THE FIRST 24 HOURS ARE THE HARDEST,” bore little resemblance to the film’s message. *Scarlet Pages* depicts a powerful woman forced to reconcile decisions made in her youth—giving up her baby in pursuit of a career and a life devoid of the social trappings of womanhood. In depicting a female lead with agency, *Scarlet Pages* challenged patriarchal femininity in a time when women, as second-class citizens, were seldom provided a voice within the paternalistic social structure. Furthermore, and ironically, the film directly attacked the blatant sexism that often defined womanhood, while ignoring Warner Bros.’ own connection to the victimization of women.

Defeated by Warner Bros.’ tactics and Harry’s insistence that the tagline was not indecent, Hays’s assistant, Frank Wilstach, adopted a laissez faire approach to the studio: “Let them keep on this campaign of filth and they will be sure to have censorship in every state in the Union.”³⁰² Warner Bros.’ advertisements repeatedly prompted MPPDA inquisitions, regarding their “obnoxious,” “indelicate,” “indecent,” and immoral content.³⁰³ The brothers mastered the art of advertising misdirection, and sex enabled the

³⁰¹ “What’s Wrong with the Movies?” *The Houston Chronicle and Haralld* (July 10, 1930), Record 705, Legacy 713, 09-0835, *MPPDA Digital Archive*. The *Houston Chronicle* commentary referred specifically to the Sextette advertising.

³⁰² Letter from Frank J. Wilstach to Joseph Plunkett, RKO general manager of theaters, Record 724, Legacy 732, Reel 8_0210 (Dec. 1, 1930), *MPPDA Digital Archive*.

³⁰³ Wilstach to Milliken, Record 727, Legacy 735, Reel 8_0224-8_0228 (Sept. 9, 1930), *MPPDA Digital Archive* Advertisement for *Scarlet Pages* depicted a woman’s biographical testimonial of her mistakes in

selling of the brothers' ideology. In the aforementioned films, advertising little resembled the film's content. As Wilstach commented in reference to the brothers' diverging strategy, "I am afraid they are going to drive everybody out of the theater...if they keep on with this silly sex stuff which they have in the ads but which is not in the picture."³⁰⁴

The brother's strategy of resistance worked. Warner Bros.' genius policy of redirection and its manipulation of the system, secured the production of films and advertisements replete with taboo material. In their critique of America, the brother's incorporated taboo subjects, such as female sexuality and empowerment, anti-Semitism, prison reform, fascism, gangsters and lawlessness, while maintaining an image of propriety and respect. Despite his best efforts, Hays was powerless in influencing the brothers. They, and the rest of Hollywood moguls, knew that adherence to MPPDA guidelines was voluntary and failure to do so lacked any real repercussions.

Groups and organization that questioned the validity of the MPPDA targeted Hays, despite his limited power. Critics questioned the MPPDA's interests, its ability to control Hollywood's Jews, and Hays's loyalty to American values and culture. As a result, as historian Carr summarized, many came to see Hays as a "Gentile dupe," "the hired man

life: Loving a man, having relations out of wedlock, being pregnant out of wedlock, and more salacious, not being ashamed for her past and her sexual nature. First National Pictures, a subsidiary of Warner Brothers Pictures, first produced the film. It was categorized as action, crime drama. The following is an excerpt of the advertisement copy. "You will ask yourself these questions when you see 'Scarlet Pages': 1. Does a single sin condemn a woman to eternal shame? 2. Should a woman part with her child because she cannot give it a name? 3. Is any man qualified to judge the guilt of a woman? 4. Should women adopt the single standard of morality? 5. Is it the man or the woman who is guilty for a woman's misstep? 6. Should a child be made to suffer for betrayal by its natural father? 7. Should a woman sacrifice wealth, fame, love and reputation to save her child from shame? 8. Will a child despise the mother who has deserted it and failed to give it a name?" See also Wilstach to Hays, Record 723, Legacy, 731, Reel 8_0207 (December 6, 1930), *MPPDA Digital Archive*. The accusation is linked to an advertisement for *Scarlet Pages*. Frank Wilstach, assistant to Will H. Hays, MPPDA, attributes the approval and prompting of the advertisement to Harry Warner, specifically.

³⁰⁴ Letter to Joseph Plunkett (RKO) from Frank J. Wilstach (MPPDA), Record 724, Legacy 732, Reel 8_0210, (Nov. 26, 1930) *Flinders University, MPPDA Digital Archives*; see Reel 8_0208-8_0214 for images.

for a bunch of rich Jews,” as corrupt in nature as those he was hired to protect.³⁰⁵ Hays ineffectiveness in controlling Hollywood studios deteriorated his relationship with Protestant allies. The result was an increase of grass-root assaults against Hollywood, as well as more pronounced threats of censorship from State and Congressional Censoring Boards. Hollywood ambivalence toward industry self-regulation forced Hays to align the MPPDA with the Legion of Decency.³⁰⁶ By 1934, the Legion of Decency embedded itself in Hollywood via the creation of the Production Code, *the* code of morality and decency by which the film industry would have to abide.³⁰⁷ Pre-Code Hollywood effectively ended.

The 1934 Production Code Administration developed out of an already established office within the MPPDA, the Studio Relations Committee (SRC). The SRC was tasked with approving a film’s final negative and ensuring Hollywood complied with the regulations set forth by the Production Code (1930). Co-authored by Martin Quigley and Rev. Daniel A. Lord, the Code was accepted by Hays in an attempt to curtail “grass-root assaults on Hollywood morality” as well as build better relations with the Legion of Decency.³⁰⁸ The Code, however, proved problematic. Like the “Formula” and “Don’ts and Be Careful’s” before it, the Code merely “looked good on paper but crumpled in

³⁰⁵ Carr, 66-67.

³⁰⁶ Couvares, 591, 608; *New York Times*, July 4, 1936, p 15, “Film Legion to Aid in World Clean-Up, Record 2751, Lgacy 2767, 1936, Reel 11-1268, *Flinders University, MPPDA Digital Archives*.

³⁰⁷ Couvares, 591; Barbara Hall and Val Almendarez, “Hollywood and the Production Code,” *History of Cinema Series 1: Hollywood and the Production Code*, Margaret Herrick library, <http://microformsguides.gale.com/Data/Instructions/32730FM.html>; Welky, 57-58. Martin J. Quigley, publisher and editor of motion picture periodicals, including *Motion Picture Daily*, *International Motion Picture Almanac*, *Moving Picture World*, and *Motion Picture Herald*, and Daniel A. Lord, Jesuit priest, wrote the Code.

³⁰⁸ Couvares, *Mainstreet*, 608.

practice.”³⁰⁹ The bureaucratic framework was unenforceable due largely to a system that placed censorship powers in the hands of Hollywood studios. Self-regulation was voluntary.³¹⁰ Hollywood’s adoption of the code, however, allowed for the creation of the Production Code Administration. By 1934, Hay’s appointment of Joseph Breen, combined with Breen’s relationship with the Catholic Church, changed the dynamic.

As a result, Hollywood was on the path to enforceable self-imposed regulation. As Hollywood scholar, Doherty summarized, the “theological take-over of American cinema” emerged with the MPPDA, was managed by the PCA (through Joseph Breen), and was controlled by the Catholic Legion of Decency. Hollywood moguls instigated each step, viewing it as a favorable compromise to a potential governmental takeover of the film industry.³¹¹ In Breen, censors and the Legion found a champion, while Hays found a direct connection to the Catholic Church and an ally. A known anti-Semite, Breen’s only qualifications appeared to be his religious affiliation and overt anti-Semitism. He promised to control those he publicly referred to as “the scum of the earth,” while simultaneously removing “the vulgar, the cheap, and the tawdry” from public view.³¹² Hollywood’s sole purpose, Breen insisted, was to produce films for the purpose of entertainment. Through the Code, Breen sought to secure that directive.

³⁰⁹ Doherty, 47.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 46.

³¹¹ Hall and Almendarez.

³¹² Welky, 57-58; Hoberman and Shandler, 58; Gregory D. Black, *The Catholic Crusade Against the Movies, 1940-1975* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics and the Movies* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Gregory D. Black, “Hollywood Censored: The Production Code Administration and the Hollywood Film Industry, 1930-1940.” *Film History*, 3, no. 3 (1989), 167-189. See also Walsh. Walsh contends that although Breen and the PCA were responsible for ensuring strict adherence to the Code, the Catholic Church controlled the PCA. Through the Legion of Decency, the Catholic Church not only screened scripts, photos, and other materials provided by studios, it provided a grading scale (A-morally unobjectable; B-objectable in all or part; C-condemned) that would restrict Catholic patronization. This

The Code included two main sections: General Principles and Working Principles—both of which expanded on the MPPDA’s ill-fated “Don’ts and Be Carefuls.” Father Lord’s insisted that the Code be based on “principles on which all decent men would agree. Its basis was the Ten Commandments, which [was] felt was a standard of morality throughout the civilized world.”³¹³ The Code required studios to submit to strict regulations regarding sex, crime, religion, vulgarity, obscenity, dances, profanity, costume, religion, national feelings, repellent subjects, and titles.³¹⁴ Significantly, while the PCA prohibited racial discrimination against America’s allies, such as Mexico and China, discrimination against blacks remained status quo. The only exception pertained to films produced for foreign markets.

The PCA and the Code were limited by one significant loophole: films “[had to] be reasonably accepted to reasonable people.” This provided the film industry the necessary leeway to either bypass regulation entirely, or produce films that tackled dicey topics while still adhering to the Code.³¹⁵ As a result, the Production Code was ratified on March 31, 1930, but not strictly enforced until 1934. Until its enforcement, Hollywood

grading scale and additional suggestions were discussed with Breen, ultimately influencing his views and decisions.

³¹³ Doherty, 174; Welky, 59-60. The Code did not designate racism as restricted content so long as it was limited to the “caricatur[ing] of Hispanics, African Americans, or other non-Western ethnicities.”

³¹⁴ PCA Manual, (N.D.), Record 2751, Legacy 2767, 1936, Reel 11-12-0664-0677, *Flinders University, MPPDA Digital Archives*; PCA manual, 594-96, online <https://asu.edu>. See also “The Motion Picture Production Code” for regulations, and amendments. Available online https://productioncode.dhwritings.com/multipleframes_productioncode.php. Repellent subjects included: 1. Actual hangings, or electrocutions as legal punishment for crime; 2. Third degree methods; 3. Brutality and possible gruesomeness; 4. Branding of people or animals; 5. Apparently cruelty to children or animals; 6. Surgical operations. Significantly, racial discrimination against America’s allies, such as Mexico and China, were prohibited, but discrimination against blacks, was not. The only exception pertained to films produced to foreign markets.

³¹⁵ Hall and Almendarez.

produced racy films aimed at redirecting the woes of the American public, increasing sales, and, in the case of Warner Bros., challenging social norms.³¹⁶

Initially, the Production Code Administration, like the Hays Office, lacked enforcement depending instead on “good faith” and individual studios. The result was blatant disregard for the Code and films that actively violated the Code’s regulations. Commonly referred to as “Pre-Code Hollywood,” films released before 1934 covered subject matter which included, but were not limited to, crime, sexual innuendo (through the likes of Mae West), and attacks on friendly nations and beliefs—all of which were championed by Warner Bros. As a result, Breen designated Warner Bros. films as “the lowest bunch” specializing in “slum-pent melodramas with low-rent characters—bootleggers, boxers, convicts, taxi drivers, waitresses, stenographers, and working girls plying the oldest of professions.”³¹⁷

The industry’s disregard for the Code resulted in the formation of ad-hoc coalitions between “like-minded” forces of the Catholic based National League of Decency, film research organization such as the Motion Picture Research Council, and anti-monopoly enforcement of National Recovery Administration.³¹⁸ “We have them at on the run,”

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood’s Censor: Joseph I. Breen and The Production Code Administration* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 53. For more on pre-Code Hollywood, see Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), and Frank Miller, *Censored Hollywood: Sex, Sin, and Violence on Screen* (Atlanta, GA: Turner Publishing, 1994).

³¹⁸ J. Douglas Gomery, “Hollywood, the National Recovery Administration, and the Question of Monopoly Power,” *Journal of the University Film Association*, 31, no. 2, “Economic and Industry History of the American Film” (Spring, 1979), 47-52; National Recovery Administration, “Code of Fair Competition for the Motion Picture Industry,” November 27, 1933, US Printing Office, 1933. Online at <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00006594/00001> Retrieved 9.13.19; Carr, 32. The Roosevelt administration instructed the NRA to implement the Code of Fair Competition for the Motion Picture Industry, which essentially threatened to dismantle Hollywood’s monopoly.

Breen quipped, “to be sure, but the running, so far, is only a dog-trot, [but] they have not awakened fully to the seriousness of the situation...we still have a long way to go.”³¹⁹

By 1934, Hollywood and the MPPDA acquiesced to a series of intimidation tactics that included boycotts, picketing, and debilitating “scientific” studies, resulting in the industry-wide adoption of the Code.³²⁰ Through the PCA, censors instituted tangible reform in Hollywood. The Code enforced strict guidelines on content, prohibiting the production, or release, of a film until formal approval from the PCA was obtained. Studios no longer received recommendations on how to address violations, but instead received definitive rejections that mandated changes before a film could be released. A Code Seal verified that the film in question was worthy of the U.S. public. Studios that failed to comply risked a penalty of \$25,000.³²¹ Hollywood producers generally adopted a cautious approach to films, choosing to err on the side of the PCA for fear of social and financial repercussions at home and abroad—with one blatant exception, Warner Bros.

Conclusion

The struggle between industry, administration, and the Warner brothers was not one that would soon resolve. The brothers generally got away with ignoring the Code. Embedded within films about criminality, racism, and other dark-matter, was a

³¹⁹“Protestantism and Jewry Join Catholics in Movie Ban,” *Christian Century* (July 4, 1934), quoted in Doherty, 67.

³²⁰ Doherty, 53; Jack Vizzard, *See No Evil: Life Inside a Hollywood Censor* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 39-40; Doherty, 56-70; Henry James Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* (New York, NY: the Macmillan Company, 1934), 282. Available online https://archive.org/stream/moviemadechldre00formrich/moviemadechldre00formrich_djvu.txt. This four-year period is incorporated into the “Pre-Code” period, despite the existence of the Code. The Motion Picture Council, created through a merger of various educational and scientific community members, was responsible for the Payne Fund Studies. Its summaries, *Our Movie Made Children*, by Henry James Forman, concluded that “Motion Pictures,” not parents, schools, or churches, “are one of the most powerful influences in ‘making the mind’ at the present time. They affect great masses of people and the affect these masses during impressionable years in childhood and youth.

³²¹ Doherty, 67.

resounding message of the limitations of American democratic ideals. Moreover, those limitations were often intertwined with change and betterment. Warner Bros.' films stressed the possibilities of democracy by highlighting its limitations.

Overall, Warner Bros.' advertisements proved inconsequential and forgettable, a blip in Pre-Code Hollywood's history of immorality and reprehension. They show how the brothers were willing to rattle and navigate regulations, personal rivalries, and social mores to achieve their Americanization goals.

As Warner Bros. historians, Richard Schickel and George Perry succinctly summarized,

The verbal air of a Warner film in those years was blue with innuendo ...and visually it was always clear who was sleeping with whom. At Warner Bros. the assumption was that no woman would be ruined by a *double entendre*, no man was turned into a lustful beast by sight of a chorine in dishabille....they [treated] their audiences as if they were grownups, capable of accepting dialogue and situations that accurately imitated life as most people experienced it.³²²

Until 1933, the brothers created films that illuminated the limitations of the U.S. democratic system, highlighting its failures in an attempt to influence a more inclusive, open society. The election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler's ascension to the German Chancellorship, however, marked a significant transition in the brother's Americanization effort. While Warner Bros.' films continued their drive to create social change, under Harry's direction, Warner Bros. films evolved, volleying between extreme patriotism and foreboding, stressing the importance of democracy while admonishing the potential risk fascism posed to freedom, Christianity, and democracy. The result was a whitewashed, hard-hitting, Jew hiding, Nazi fighting campaign seeped in patriotism.

³²² Richard Schickel and George Perry, *You Must Remember This: The Warner Bros. Story* (Philadelphia, PA: Running Press, 2008), 66.

Between 1933 and 1939, the brothers initiated a relentless campaign of patriotic propaganda. Warner Bros.' film, shorts, and animation, stressed the errors of isolationism, the threat of Nazis, and dangers of anti-Semitism. Furthermore, Warner Bros. films accentuated American benevolence and patriotism. The brothers used imagery, such as the American flag, and patriotic songs, such as the *Star Spangled Banner*, to associate with white mainstream-America, while dissociating themselves from Judaism. The industry wide mandatory adoption of the Production Code in 1933 had failed to stop the brothers' momentum. Instead, they, along with members of the Warner Bros.' leadership, particularly animation producer Leon Schlesinger, became professionals at navigating the loopholes of the Code. Redirection and manipulation became standard policy in their assimilation objective.

Chapter Four

“United We Survive, Divided We Fall!”: Warner Bros., Politics, and Americanization in the Quest to Save Democracy.

‘In 1934, when people, never mind what their faith is, that is immaterial, were persecuted and executed, that we didn't rise. Had we have risen at that time, there would have been no war. If 500 or 600,000 dogs were being executed in Germany, I'm positive that the world would have risen. But, oh, no. We hear arguments about isolationists about everything under the sun except making a home for those that were persecuted’.”³²³ - Harry Warner

Hitler's ascension to power in Germany, and Roosevelt's 1933 Presidential victory, provided the impetus for the most significant transition in Warner Bros.' Americanization campaign: saving democracy from fascism without compromising Harry and Jack's patriotic and democratic messages.³²⁴ Hitler's anti-Semitism influenced Harry's initial educational agenda and purpose for Warner Bros., becoming political activists determined to save American democracy. Conversely, in Roosevelt the brothers found a like-minded activist with a belief in the power of film as a tool for change. Together, Hitler and Roosevelt were instrumental in directing Warner Bros. into explicit politics, focused on saving American democracy.

Under Harry's direction, between 1933 and 1941 the brothers weaponized film, shorts and animation as integral parts of both their Americanization campaign and their anti-Nazi activism.³²⁵ During this period, the brothers' Americanization campaign shifted from critiquing democratic limitations to highlighting their unique qualities in an attempt

³²³ Harry Warner speech, Friendship Food Train Rally, in Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 1:04:44.

³²⁴ Due to the scope of Warner Bros. anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi campaign, which incorporated Italy and Germany, this chapter will be limited to the brother's anti-Nazi films and agenda. Both terms anti-fascist and anti-Nazi are used interchangeably within Warner Bros. films during the 1930s. Both, however, tend to focus on Nazism and its threat on America as well as its anti-Semitic ideology.

³²⁵ From 1933 to 1945, Harry Warner is directly responsible for the content of Warner Bros. films and the directives of Warner Bros. Studios.

to save democracy. Harry and Jack carefully maneuvered the transition in the Americanization campaign as they, along with other Jewish moguls, were under scrutiny by anti-Semites, anti-Hollywoodites, state censors, and the PCA. As such, the brothers had to reconcile two overlapping conflicts to combat Nazism: Judaism and anti-Semitism. In critiquing Hitler and Nazism, the brothers had to convince their audience that their loyalties were not with European Jews, but with the U.S., and that their critiques of Hitler were not motivated because of their Jewish roots. The brother's solution relied on their ability to sell patriotism.

Between 1933 and 1941, Warner Bros. films such as *Black Legion* (1937), *They Won't Forget* (1937), and *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), focused on the dangers of fascism to democracy while stressing the power of Americans to thwart its advances. Each film highlights the strengths of the U.S. political system and is inspired by an event in which anti-Semitism or hate against immigrant others is central. Hollywood's exclusionary politics, however, meant that the films skirted around anti-Semitism. After 1933 Warner Bros. anti-Nazi films avoided discussing anti-Semitism or, with the exception of *Confessions*, Nazism directly. Instead, Nazism and Fascism unified in Warner Bros. films as a threat to democracy, Christianity, and freedom, not Judaism.

Of the brothers, Harry exhibited the most pronounced transformation during this phase. Despite his allegiance to Judaism, he and the remaining brothers seldom, if ever, publicly discussed or made reference to their connection to it.³²⁶ In its place, Harry, as the company spokesperson, dedicated public speeches to stressing his and Warner Bros.

³²⁶ The 1941 Senate Propaganda hearing is the primary example of this exception. Harry remained a proud Jew, and his personal and private dedication to Judaism did not falter. Publicly, however, Fascism proved of greater significance. The implications of Fascism on the many outweighed the personal cost to one.

support and dedication for democracy, often praising Christianity while espousing disdain for Hitler, Nazis, fascism, and communism. The brothers' shift in their Americanization campaign accentuated their identity as Americans fighting against fascism rather than as Jews condemning anti-Semitism.

* * * * *

In 1917, following the United States' entrance into WWI, the Warner brothers, like other exuberant citizens, eagerly declared their patriotism by volunteering, in whatever capacity possible, to the Allied cause. According to Jack, both he and Sam were denied enlistment as soldiers, and were instead immediately assigned to the Army Signal Corps. Film, or rather the production of Government sponsored shorts, proved their most logical, and useful, outlet.³²⁷ Working with the Signal Corps, the brothers produced their first government sponsored short, *Open Your Eyes*. Intended as a training film for the troops headed to France, *Open Your Eyes* (1919) was a cautionary tale designed to reduce (or prevent) the spread of venereal diseases (VD).³²⁸ As part of their patriotic contribution, the brothers produced the film at cost. Harry, however, secured the rights for commercial screenings, confident in the belief that “the theme might have some appeal to parents who wanted their sons and daughters to have the facts instead of the usual back-alley misinformation.”³²⁹

³²⁷ Warner and Jennings, 87; Warner-Sperling and Millner, 58-59; Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 16:50.

³²⁸ Warner-Sperling and Millner, 58.

³²⁹ Warner and Jennings, 88.

Directed by Sam, the short focused on soldiers led astray by, as Jack eloquently put it, “French babes” and “quack doctors.”³³⁰ The short marks Jack’s only acting role. In it, he plays a soldier seeking remedy after contracting gonorrhea; Jack is taken advantage of by a “quack doctor” selling useless tonics for tens of dollars. Like others before him, he finds no remedy. Commercially, the film was a failure, resulting in a financial loss for Warner Bros. Its success materialized not in box office returns, however, but in the development of a relationship between Warner Bros., the U.S. Army, and the U.S. government by default.

Open Your Eyes marked the brothers’ initial involvement with the U.S. government. Unlike social commentary, political activism proved restrictive, supported by calamity that drove the U.S. government in search of access to the film industry. Thus, before 1933, the brothers experienced limited contact with the U.S. government as allies. Roosevelt changed that dynamic.

The brother’s association with Roosevelt originated during his 1932 presidential campaign. In a clandestine meeting, “Democratic chieftains,” including Roosevelt’s advisers, Joseph Kennedy, and John Raskob, former General Motors chairman and the new chairman of the Democratic National Committee, pitched Harry and Jack the case for backing Roosevelt in his presidential run.³³¹ Despite being lifelong Republicans, Roosevelt’s draw was simple. First, and of primary importance, it benefited the brothers’ reputation. A successful alliance with Roosevelt and his administration provided invaluable, and irrefutable, proof of their allegiance to the U.S. as Americans. Unlike the

³³⁰ Ibid. Initially, due to lack of experience by the brothers, the brothers chose Gilbert P. Hamilton as director of the short. However, due to disagreements regarding timing and framing, Hamilton quit, rendering Sam director.

³³¹ Gabler, 317.

incumbent President, Herbert Hoover, Roosevelt's governmental philosophies aligned with the moralistic and diverse views that had defined the Warner brothers and Warner Bros. socio-political film representations.³³² Roosevelt offered Hollywood, in general, and Jews in specific, the illusion of protection. Although anti-Semitism not only persisted but increased under his administration, Roosevelt, like Harry, understood the power film and media outlets offered in the dissemination of propaganda. Furthermore, Roosevelt believed in the power of film to educate and uplift and, unlike Hoover, was more likely to accept or seek a relationship with Hollywood while in office. Reciprocity between studio and administration provided the means by which to spearhead their attack against Hitler, Nazis, and, anti-Semitism.

Second, as the depression dragged on Warner Bros. Studios (along with the rest of Hollywood moguls) became involved in antitrust litigation that charged them with monopolizing the studio system and theater chains. Harry believed that a friendly and mutually beneficial relationship with the Roosevelt administration could alleviate the brothers' legal woes. Harry's theater buying spree, combined with Hollywood studios' block-booking practices rendered Warner Bros. easy targets for litigation.³³³ The American Legion Theater at Mayfield, Kentucky, for example, alleged that Warner Bros. Studios Inc., attempted to compel the American Legion Theater into selling by

³³² For more on the Roosevelt/Hollywood connection see Ronald Brownstein, *The Power and the Glitter: The Hollywood-Washington Connection* (New York, NY: Vintage Press, 1992). See also Richard W. Stele, *Propaganda in an Open Society: The Roosevelt Administration and the Media, 1933-1941* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985).

³³³ Until 1948, Hollywood's heavyweights forced independent theaters to purchase B and C movies (movies without the same production quality or lead actors as headliners) sold in blocks with the lease of feature films. Theater owners had no influence on the films received.

“depriv[ing] [it] of the amount of pictures theretofore available.”³³⁴ Warner Bros., L.S.

Andersen, president of the Legion Theater Co. argued, were specifically infringing on its “right to live,” despite “hav[ing] no objection to fair competition.”³³⁵

The relationship between Roosevelt and the brothers wavered on friendship, but was limited to potential gains that advanced both sides.³³⁶ Both Harry and Roosevelt exploited the relationship to achieve their own objectives. Roosevelt encouraged the relationship with Warner Bros., securing a connection that was vital for his presidential election, for advancing his New Deal agenda and, after the outbreak of war, uniting Americans. Unlike other Hollywood moguls, the brothers offered Roosevelt an outlet to express New Deal liberalism. Similarly, as President, Roosevelt encouraged the so-called “problem films” because they aided his cause, stressing the strength and ability of Americans and America in its post-Depression resurgence. The brothers were especially significant to the Roosevelt administration as the U.S. drew closer to another war, and film became weaponized as propaganda. As Hollywood historian David Welky argued, “The White

³³⁴ Letter from L.S. Anderson, President of the Legion Theater Co., Inc. to Hon. Alben W. Barkley, U.S. Senator, Washington D.C., (June 17, 1933), Flinders University MPPDA Digital Archive, Record 944, Legacy 952, Reel 10_10-0975. For more on the Kentucky case, see Record 943, Legacy 951, Reel 10-0991; Record 944, Legacy 952, Reel 10-0993-10-0995.

³³⁵ Letter from L.S. Anderson, President of the Legion Theater Co., Inc. to Hon. Alben W. Barkley, U.S. Senator, Washington D.C., (June 17, 1933), Record 944, Legacy 952, Reel 10_10-0995.

³³⁶ Letter from L.S. Anderson, President of the Legion Theater Co., Inc. to Hon. Alben W. Barkley, U.S. Senator, Washington D.C., (June 17, 1933), Record 944, Legacy 952, Reel 10_10-0995. See *United States v. Paramount*, 334 U.S. 131, Known as the Paramount Decision (or Decree), Supreme court decision against Hollywood <https://www.justice.gov/atr/paramount-decree-review> . For more on Warner Bros. theaters and *US v Paramount* see Warner Bros. Legal Dept., *U.S. v Paramount*, et al: Early History of Warner Bros. as a Partnership, *Warner Bros. Archives*, Box 8, Folder 15494B. The Roosevelt Administration instigated the federal investigation that would usher in the collapse of Hollywood’s studio system and the demise of Hollywood’s initial association with the Democratic party. For the brothers, a charge from the Roosevelt administration proceeded a bitter dispute over the ownership of a chain of theaters in St. Luis that originated soon after the acquisition of First National Pictures. The US government filed a similar suit against Warner Bros. and the rest of Hollywood in 1936, claiming the studio system violated the Sherman Act. “For what I did,” Harry complained, “they could have given a little help.” Although the antitrust suit, *US v Paramount Pictures Inc.*, would not be resolved until 1948, Harry’s efforts failed in swaying Roosevelt into eliminating the suit entirely—the relationship effectively soured.

House ...took a keen interest in the brothers' success or failure. At stake was public acceptance of the administration's pro-Democratic foreign policy, which shaped the messages both pictures offered, and Hollywood's ideological direction."³³⁷

To maintain an active relationship with Hollywood, Roosevelt placated the attention-seeking, power hungry, desires of Jack Warner, usually while distancing himself from Harry's more significant requests to combat Nazism or assist German (and European) Jews.³³⁸ For his role in the Roosevelt campaign, for example, Jack was rewarded with the title of Chair of the motion picture division of "Roosevelt for President," and, after the 1932 election, with the position of Chair of the National Recovery Act.³³⁹ The positions were in title only. Although unsubstantiated, Jack bragged that Roosevelt attempted to reward his efforts with an ambassadorship.³⁴⁰ Jack relished this relationship. "I think he enjoyed having me around," Jack recalled, "and there was to be a period when I virtually commuted to the White House, because I was an amusing fellow who wanted nothing in exchange. Court Jester, I was, and proud of it."³⁴¹ A quid pro quo, however, existed between Harry and Roosevelt.

³³⁷ Welky, 102.

³³⁸ Welky, 17-18. Welky points out that Roosevelt's administration had multiple connections to the film industry. They included Presidential secretaries Stephen Early and Marvin McIntyre (who both had backgrounds in newsreels), Securities and Exchange commissioner, Joseph Kennedy (had experience as a producer), and two family members, son James and son-in-law, John Boettinger both became involved with studios and the MPPDA, respectively. Welky further confirmed Roosevelt's manipulation of studio heads and their desire to "have his ear" and "approval." "He accordingly dished out small favors while keeping producers at arm's length. Roosevelt knew a phone call, a personal note, or an autographed photo made them happy, like dogs that get scratched behind the ears. FDR kept them close but never so close he owed them any favors." For more on the Roosevelt Administration in Hollywood see Giuliana Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996).

³³⁹ Gabler, 317.

³⁴⁰ Gabler, 318; John Davis, "Notes on Warner Brothers Foreign Policy," *Velvet Light Trap*, 4 (Spring 1972), 25; Colgan, 69.

³⁴¹ Gabler, 318. During WWII, Jack earned the title of lieutenant colonel in the US Army.

Harry sought Roosevelt's ear in political and social issues, and constantly reached out for his approval and assistance. In particular, Harry gravitated toward Roosevelt to protect Warner Bros. from the impending limitations of the Code, while advancing the brothers' assimilation objectives and his own moralistic agenda, particularly as they revolved around European Jews.³⁴² Initially, the brothers' eagerness placed Roosevelt in the position of power. In 1933, however, Adolf Hitler's ascension to German Chancellor shifted the power dynamic to Warner Bros. as Roosevelt was stymied by overwhelming isolationist mentality of the American people. While Roosevelt did little to dissuade their projects, the brothers often found themselves "attempt[ing] to influence and even pressure Roosevelt into taking a more vigorous stand on Hitler"—a position that Harry would pressure on his subordinates, stars, family, and Hollywood cohorts.³⁴³ Roosevelt provided the means by which the brothers could secure their Americanization and anti-Nazi objectives.

Anti-Nazism Activism Origins, Patriotism, and Revised Americanization

³⁴² Betty Sheinbaum, Warner-Sperling, *Interview*, 9:58. Before the end of the war, Harry reached out to Roosevelt in an attempt to redirect Jewish refugees from Israel to Alaska. Harry later attempted to sell the idea to Harry S. Truman. Memorandum of Conference with President Harry S. Truman, (July 10, 1946) Box 4-Warner Bros. Government and Political Activity, Folder 2947, Harry M Warner Files, *WBA*. "My suggestion is that the United States adopt emergency legislation to permit entry of displaced persons into Alaska, a territory with 72,000 population which could sustain millions. I had occasion to look into the Alaska situation very thoroughly in 1939 when the refugee problem was so serious. At that time our company sent camera crews to Alaska to make a motion picture report of the country as to its suitability for resettling refugees from Europe. Those films convinced me that Alaska offers a practical and workable solution. The development of Alaska and its resources by these people would be of great advantage to the United States socially and productively. The idea is one which has long been advocated by the Interior Department and I am informed that at the present time the War Department would regard colonization and development of Alaska as desirable from a military point of view. I understand that the principle objection to opening Alaska to immigrants is that such immigrants would not remain in Alaska but would quickly love into the United States."

³⁴³ Colgan, 67. Colgan cites the work of John Davis, Paul J. Vanderwood, and Ina Rae Hark supporting the claim that Roosevelt played a direct role in various Warner Bros. pictures. Hark contends that *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), Roosevelt serves as unofficial technical adviser on Warner Bros. political films, while Vanderwood asserts that Roosevelt was "in part a product of the Warner-Roosevelt connection."

The Warner Bros. anti-Nazi activism originated in 1933, and continued until the Allied victory in 1945. Harry instigated the brothers' activism, as he was acutely aware of the threat of anti-Semitic ideology having survived anti-Semitism pogroms during his youth. While visiting Germany in 1932, Harry witnessed firsthand Germany's reinvigorated anti-Semitism and feared for the life of German Jews under Hitler.³⁴⁴ By 1933, Hitler's ascension to power secured the death of German Jews' short-lived democratic freedoms, and for Harry, the catalyst for an improvised, and poignant, Americanization campaign focused on saving U.S. democracy from the infiltration of Nazism, securing, even advancing, the position of Jews in America. The brothers' Americanization campaign thus shifted. Instead of critiquing America's limitations, Warner Bros.' films became politically charged, intent on saving democracy by comparing it to the demagoguery of Hitler's Nazi Germany. Furthermore, Warner Bros. films re-imagined patriotism to properly combat anti-Semitism, associating the brother's loyalty to the U.S., as well as a means of deflecting their own association to Judaism.

According to Hollywood folklore, Warner Bros. Studios effectively closed their German branch in 1936. Their decision to cut ties with Germany proceeded the brutal murder of Warner Bros. German representative, and Jew, Joe Kauffman. The legend, perpetuated, and likely created, by Jack, states that he initiated the closing after discovering that Kauffman, "like many other outnumbered Jew (*sic*), was trapped in an alley. They hit him with fists and clubs, and kicked the life out of him with their boots, and left him dying there." The incident prompted Jack to immediately close up Warner

³⁴⁴ Sheinbaum, *Interviews*, 56:12.

Bros. offices in Germany “for [he] knew that terror was creeping across the country.”³⁴⁵

The legend, however, is problematic. First, there was no “Joe” Kauffman associated with Warner Bros. The only Kauffman that worked for Warner Bros. in Germany, general manager Phil Kauffman, fled Nazi Germany in 1933 without incident or attack.³⁴⁶

Second, the legend adds two years to Warner Bros. departure from Germany, effectively negating the impact of Warner Bros.’ initial anti-Hitler and anti-Semitic stance. Third, Jack’s version essentially erases Harry’s role in the company’s monumental decision. And, lastly, by both focusing on the Kauffman murder, and eliminating Harry, Warner Bros. legend dictates that a murder of a Warner Bros. employee, who happened to be Jewish, “arouse[d] them from passivity.”³⁴⁷ Anti-Semitism, though important, was of secondary importance to the story of Kauffman’s murder.

What is most likely is that the Kauffman story was a fabrication of Jack’s vivid imagination, aimed at re-writing Warner Bros. history in an effort to present himself as both leader and instigator of change. As Warner Bros. biographer Michael Freedland summarized, Jack “was not a man to allow the truth to interfere with a good story.”³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Warner and Jennings, 248; Colgan, 40; Doherty, *Hollywood and Hitler*, 313. The Warner’s legend has permeated many Warner Bros. biographies, many of which have focused on Jack’s autobiography as the primary source for Warner Bros. history.

³⁴⁶ Colgan, 40. Kauffman died of natural causes in Stockholm in December 1933.

³⁴⁷ Colgan, 41.

³⁴⁸ Freedland, 38. Colin Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War: Films and American Society 1939-1952* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980), 110; Colgan 41. This is not to say that Jack was not involved in Jewish causes. In 1927, despite his unwilling to commit to his own Jewishness, Jack, despite Harry objections, donated four thousand dollars to the United Jewish Appeal, while also becoming chairman if its drive. Harry’s objections were founded on the conditions of the period, as well as his desire to control Jack’s financial contributions. According to Harry, Jack was a “sucker” for providing funds to an organization that, Harry claimed, wasted half of their donations. Harry furthered that Jack should use donations as an investment to the company. This position changed in 1933. Harry Warner, letter to Jack Warner, Jack Warner Papers, *WBA*, Jack Warner Correspondence 1920s, Box 57, June 21, 1927; Colgan 53. By 1953, the brothers became integral in fundraising for the American Jewish Appeal and the United Jewish Welfare Fund. Harry bombarded Warner Bros. employees with “suggestions” which bordered on threats that donations be provided. As Jack stated in a letter to producer, Edward Alperson, “The Lord had

Contrary to Jack's assertions, Harry instigated the closing of Warner Bros.' German market. Likewise, Harry's actions were motivated not by a fabricated murder of one, but rather by fear for the murder of many.

In 1933, as Hitler consolidated power as German Chancellor and Germany initiated a series of decrees that sanctioned anti-Semitism, Harry began the process of terminating Warner Bros. production in Germany and limiting its German market to film distribution.³⁴⁹ Increasing restrictions against Jews and the motion picture industry prompted the abrupt and complete withdrawal of Warner Bros. from Germany on July 15, 1934.³⁵⁰ These restrictions included the elimination of Jewish names from credits, as well as firing and replacing Jewish directors, producers, and actors. German restrictions were later extended to purchasing films from Jews, as well as complying to "morality" clauses that ensured a favorable depiction of Germany under Nazi rule.³⁵¹ Warner Bros. was the only studio to break from the German market.³⁵²

(sic) been good to us so we want to be good to others. If Sid Lud has not made a contribution, tap him. In fact, tap anyone you know for help. It is a very cheap investment for humanity, and you won't regret it." Jack further stressed this technique in a letter to talent agent, Phil Berg, "Tap any Jewish boy you know who have not given." "Inter-Office Memo from Edward Seizer to Bill Schaefer Re: United Jewish Appeals contributions, (May 28, 1953); Memo to Jules Bisno from Bill Schaefer Re: "Cartoon Company," (May 29, 1953), *WBA*, Box 5-Jewish and Minority Cause, Folder 2947 - Divorcement Case.

³⁴⁹ Colgan, 32.

³⁵⁰ "Par Leaving Germany with Notice to 150 Employees in Berlin: WB Only Other Am. Co. on Way," *Variety* (June 6, 1933), 17; and "New European Film Map," *Variety* (September 18, 1934), 17; Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 50:34. In 1936, for example, a German individual showed interested in purchasing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In response to a German law that dictated theatrical producer and director, Max Reinhardt's name be removed from the credits, Jack stated, "We are not interested in selling pictures to Germany under any such conditions...Please do not remove the 'Reinhardt' name from any place—to say nothing about Germany." Jack Warner, Memorandum to Sam Morris, Jack L. Warner Papers, (January 9, 1936), Charles Einfeld File, box 58, *WBA*; Colgan, p 44.

³⁵¹ "Nazi Orders Jews Dismissed by American Film Companies," *New York Times*, April 2, 1933, 2; Doherty, *Hollywood and Hitler*, 313. The March 23, 1933 decree for German moral health stipulated that if a foreign film portrayed Germany or Germans unfavorably, the foreign studio would be required to edit the film to the liking of the German government, regardless of their final destination. Failure to adhere to the stipulations would result in denial of exhibition within Germany. As a result, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, had the power to enforce the censorship of all motions pictures "calculated to endanger important State interests or public order, or offend National Socialist moral, artistic or religious sentiments,

Before their withdrawal, however, the brothers had produced a series of films and animated shorts that made clear their abhorrence for Nazism. These films and shorts stressed Nazism's inherent anti-Semitism and the fear it perpetrated, as well as the brother's personal resistance to the "Nazi government's policies through pressure and intimidation"—*Captured!* (1933) and *Bosko's Picture Show* (1933).³⁵³ Intended for the German and American markets, *Captured!* is, on the surface, a story of a love triangle in which two life-long friends, Captain Fred Allison (Leslie Howard), and Lt. Jack Digby (Douglas Fairbanks Jr.), are in love with the same woman, Monica A. Allison (Margaret Lindsay). During Capt. Allison's two-year imprisonment, Digby has an affair with Monica, his best friend's wife. By chance, the two end up in the same prison camp. Capt. Allison is unaware of the affair between his wife and best friend. While the film focuses on the struggles of both men to return to their love interest, the symbolism between camp and guards provides a controversial assessment of German brutality juxtaposed against U.S. democracy.

Two individuals with diametrically opposed personalities guard the camp. The first, the Commandant (Robert Barrat), is the stereotypical Hollywood German. He is brutal

or endanger respect for Germany abroad or her relations with foreign countries." See also Gertrude Mander and David Wilson, *Nazi Cinema* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1974), 34; "Mexico Trims WB Film, Deemed Anti-German," *Variety*, January 23, 1934, 11. Following the 1 April 1933 boycotts of Jewish business, the newly established Nazi government proceeded to remove Jews from various prominent positions, particularly those deemed influential within German life. They included civil service, arts, law, universities, German Army, the press, publishing, and sciences. For the film industry, regulations extended to the removal of Jewish managers within the German branches. Further restrictions followed. On July 1, 1933, the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda established the prohibition of employment of Jews in the production of films in Germany.

³⁵² Sheinbaum, 56:58. As early as 1934, Harry approached the Motion Picture Association urging them to get out of Germany. They refused. The German mark was too lucrative. As Johanna Blakely, managing director of the Normal Lear Center at University of Southern California (USC) points out, in the 1930s, the German market accounted for about half of the film industry's gross outside of the US. See Blakely in Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 50:34.

³⁵³ Colgan, 44.

and heartless, to both prisoners and subordinates, willing to commit violent and inhumane acts that ultimately result in his murder. His replacement, Ehrlich (Paul Lukas), however, portrays a sympathetic and democratic ideal, providing freedom and respect to the prisoners. Rather than placing prisoners in overcrowded huts and within squalid conditions, he is responsible for reimagining the camp through the implements various acts of humanity and understanding, ultimately transforming the camp into a “relatively charming English village” in which each hut houses no more than three prisoners.³⁵⁴ Ehrlich’s philosophy pertaining to the treatment of prisoners and camp conditions, provide what historian Colgan refers to as a “New Deal” mentality.³⁵⁵

The dichotomy of the two personalities is far from accidental. The release of the Warner Bros. film coincided with the Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses, the implementation of severe restrictions against Jews, and Warner Bros.’ departure from the German market. It also marked Warner Bros.’ first attack against Nazism and its continued Americanization efforts. In the film, German brutality is short-sided, unable to see the dangers it poses to Germany, or its impact on the camp prisoners and the general German population. Its existence is short lived, although impactful. Conversely, Ehrlich represents of the rational, and democratic, ideologies of the U.S. The decision to use a British actor, Ehrlich and Allison both attended Oxford, accents the alliance between the U.S. and England as well as their shared ideological attributes, particularly those surrounding freedom, respect, and prosperity. Ehrlich does not need to brutalize the prisoners. Instead, he proved the prisoners a sense of humanity and dignity, aiding in

³⁵⁴ Colgan, 89.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

their, and his, personal growth. Conversely, the Commandant relishes brutality and physical punishment. The depictions were not lost in Germany.

Despite being favorably reviewed at home, *Captured!* infuriated Germany, resulting in subsequent boycotts and restrictions in both Mexico City and Panama at the request of their German ally.³⁵⁶ Germany insisted that segments be edited from all copies to eliminate all anti-German depictions, forcing Mexico and Panama to forbid showings of the film until such edits were completed. At home, rival studios pressured Warner Bros. into complying with Germany's editing requests for fear of retribution against all Hollywood studios within the German market. In its February 1934 publication, *Variety* reported that Warner Bros. had complied with Germany's demands rather than "endanger its business in Germany."³⁵⁷ They had not. Instead, the brothers focused their attacks on German anti-Semitic policy directly.

Unwilling to succumb to German pressure, the brothers continued their anti-Nazi campaign through a scathing portrayal of Nazi anti-Semitic policy in an animated short "Bosko's Picture Show" (1933).³⁵⁸ Bosko, the creation of two ex-Disney employees,

³⁵⁶ Colgan

³⁵⁷ "2 U.S. Co's Bow to Nazi Stand," *Variety* (February 6, 1934), 11; Colgan, 90; *Propaganda*, 354-357. *Captured!* would come under attack by the US government during the Propaganda Hearings against Hollywood. Sen. Tobey asserted that *Captured!* was a propaganda piece, aided by the Roosevelt Administration, intended on both enticing America into war, and utilizing American tax dollars in the production of for-profit films. In particular, the charges stemmed from Warner Bros. use of military personnel, aircraft, oil and gasoline, food, and uniforms to portray both US and German armies. All of which, Tobey asserted, "were furnished by the Government..." Harry feigned knowledge of the production of *Captured!*

³⁵⁸ For more on Bosko and its development, see Michael Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation In Its Golden Age*, (NY, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 154, 158-160. Warner Bros. Leon Schlesinger production history, 323-365; Kevin S. Sandler, *Reading the Rabbit: Explorations in Warner Brothers Animation* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 14, 30. Until 1933, Warner Bros. newly established animation studios, produced by Leon Schlesinger, *Merrie Melodies* and *Looney Tunes*, floundered, lacking direction, promise, and, despite being filled with an influx of ex-Disney employees, talent. Plagiarizing Disney and selling Warner Bros. music catalogue was their primary objectives. The introduction of Fritz Freleng and Bob Clampett in 1933, however, revolutionized the

Hugh Harman and Rudolph Ising, was originally intended to both compete with and mimic the success of Mickey Mouse.³⁵⁹ It could not. Instead, the brothers found a new purpose for their animation studio, weaponizing it in conjunction with their own political activity

Spanning just over seven minutes in length, "Bosko's Picture Show" presents a vignette of shorts in the tradition of Movie-Tone News, "Out-Of-Tone News." In it, the shorts make light of the depression through the song "We're in the Money" (from *Gold Diggers of 1933*), depicts the League of Nations as a free-for-all wrestling match, and more significantly, makes pointed reference to Hitler's anti-Semitism. In "Pretzel, Germany: Famous Screen Lover on European Vacation," a caricature of Hitler, complete with undeniable features and swastika armband, is seen chasing a caricature of actor Jimmy Durante while wielding a meat cleaver. The Durante character repeatedly states, "Am I mortified!" while fleeing for his life.³⁶⁰ Based on Semitic physiognomy, the assumption, and gag, rests on Hitler's belief that Durante is a Jew. He is not. The last Bosko short attributed to Warner Bros, "Boskos's Picture Show" marked the studio's first animated attack against Nazism and support of explicit Americanization ideals.

medium of animation, and its purpose within Warner Bros. No longer focused on plagiarizing Disney, *Merrie Melodies* and *Looney Tunes* shifted to the creation of more edgy, funny, animation focused on adults, not children.

³⁵⁹ For more on Warner Bros. animation see Jerry Beck, *Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies: A Complete Guide to the Warner Bros. Cartoons* (New York, NY: Holt, 1989); Jerry Beck and Will Friedwald, *The Warner Brothers Cartoons* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1988); and Steve Schneider, *That's All Folks!: The Art of Warner Bros. Animation*, (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 1988).

³⁶⁰ Hugh Harman and Rudolph Ising, "Bosko's Picture Show," *Merrie Melodies*, (Sept. 2, 1933), Animated Short. Available online on [DailyMotion.com](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2e9saj). DailyMotion <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2e9saj>. See also Welky, 42; Leonard Maltin (ed), *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (NY, New York: Plume, 1987), 225, 229-30; Douglas L. McCall, *Film Cartoons: A Guide to 20th Century American Animated Features and Shorts* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 1998); and Gerald Peary and Danny Peary, *The American Animated Cartoon: A Critical Anthology* (New York, NY: Dutton, 1980); and Charles Solomon, *Enchanted Drawings: The History of Animation* (New York, NY: Random House, 1994).

“Bosko’s Picture Show” was an anomaly in film and animation. The short clearly depicted Hitler as the murderer and the ill-perceived Durante, the Jewish victim. Despite its lighthearted medium, “Bosko’s Picture Show” predicted the fate of European Jewry. Significantly, the short marked the last direct link the studio made between Hitler, Nazism, and anti-Semitism. The suffocating influences of the censorship offices (state, local, and industry), combined with political upheavals at home and abroad, and the increasing anti-Semitic sentiment which developed during the Depression, forced a transition in the brother’s Americanization campaign. Instead of critiquing the limitations of democratic ideology, the brothers focused on the creation of propaganda that illuminated patriotism as a means of saving democracy. Shorts, both animated and live action, became weaponized in selling patriotism, and central to the brother’s Americanization campaign.

Between 1934 and 1945 Warner Bros. animation, represented by *Merrie Melodies* and *Looney Tunes* cartoons, preached Americanism. Unlike Disney, Warner Bros. animation produced characters that became iconic because they resonated with a large portion of the U.S. population. They were not princesses, they were far from wholesome, and they represented a more inclusive group of ethnicities and races—they were in short, Americans. As cultural historian John Leland argued about Bugs Bunny,

Though he lived in the country, Bugs was unmistakably a creature of the modern city. He was scrappy, wise, ethnic. The accent and the action around him reflected the jitters and jump of an urbanizing society. Beneath the play of cutely drawn animals, cartoons explored the meaning of race and ethnicity from angles other media could not. In a world without certainties, identity and its contents were up for grabs.³⁶¹

³⁶¹ John Leland, *Hip: The History*, (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2005), 190.

As Americans, Bugs, Porky, and Daffy were endowed with certain responsibilities, particularly, perpetuating the importance and significance of being an American.

Although Warner Bros. adopted an animation studio to reap the financial benefits of the Disney-centric animation market as well as a vehicle for their music catalogue, a “step brother” to its film studio, animation became an integral part of the Warner Bros.

Americanization arsenal. This was often achieved through iconography that perpetuated racist images of America’s enemies during wartime. Film fought fascism through violence, humor, and ideology.

In 1939, in conjunction with Memorial Day celebration, for example, Porky Pig starred in “Old Glory,” part of Warner Bros. live-action patriotic shorts series.³⁶² The nine-minute-long short opens (and closes) with the image of an American flag, waving in the air. At the base of the flagpole, Porky is attempting to memorize the Pledge of Allegiance, while breaking to gaze up at the flag. Frustrated by his failure, he throws his history book and falls asleep, only to be woken by Uncle Sam. A tall, ethereal, God-like figure, Uncle Sam awakens Porky’s spirit and tutors him on the importance of the Pledge of Allegiance. Porky, and the viewer, is then introduced to a synthesized version of U.S. history, complete with samplings of Patrick Henry, Paul Revere, George Washington, the War of Independence, the Constitution, Abraham Lincoln, and the cost of freedom. Porky awakens, revitalized and resolved in his mission.³⁶³

³⁶² Chuck Jones, “Old Glory,” *Merrie Melodies*, (July 1, 1939), Animated Short. Available online on [DailyMotion.com](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6i6zqc) . <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6i6zqc>; Barrier, 356-357. For more on Chuck Jones, see Chuck Jones, *Chuck Amuck: The Life and Times of an Animated Cartoonist* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1990).

³⁶³“Old Glory” *Boxoffice*, (June 17, 1939), 33, cited in Colgan, 473.

The brothers' melding of Americanization and animation did not go unnoticed. As Colgan cites, *Boxoffice* reviewed "Old Glory" as "...topnotch, entertainment [that] can conceivably accomplish more in impressing Americans—particularly the younger generations—with their many democratic advantages that some of the feature-length, more ponderous and provocative documents undertaking comparable preachments." Animation and patriotism integrated seamlessly, progressing the brother's Americanization agenda. Unlike film, animation possessed other-worldly characteristics that was both embraced by its audience and separate from it. The brother's use of animation as propaganda succeeded because animation was by definition lighthearted and unreal. Film required a more careful approach.

Between 1934-1936, the brothers sought the means by which assimilation and fighting Nazism could be intertwined while traversing obstacles from the PCA, rival studios, and the U.S. government. The period, historian Christine Ann Colgan argued, marked the formative years for Warner Bros. anti-Nazi stance, "a period in which the Warner's attempted to set and test policies that would lead eventually to their intense involvement in the crusade against the Nazis."³⁶⁴ Warner Bros. films carefully negotiated Americanization objectives, navigating between activism and patriotism. To avoid attacks from critics, which included the PCA, anti-Semites, and Hollywood rivals, who criticized the brother's activism as an extension of anti-Nazi, pro-war, Jewish propaganda, Warner Bros. films did not refer to Nazism directly until 1939, with the release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*.

³⁶⁴ Colgan, 50.

By 1934, the Warner brothers secured the freedom to challenge fascism (and Nazism) largely because they had broken ties with the German market. Despite their unique position, the brothers felt a responsibility to other Jews who were fearful of embracing an anti-Nazi stance in the pre-war years. As a result, Warner Bros. films reflected the brothers' careful maneuvering between the pitfalls of anti-Semitism (both at home and abroad), their dedication to an inclusive democracy, assimilation, and activism.

Focused on the combined task of Americanization and anti-Nazi activism, between 1933 and 1936 Warner Bros. implemented a two-pronged attack. First, the brothers sought to convince their U.S. audience of their own patriotic allegiance. Second, the brothers sought to limit Nazi influence on the U.S. While the brothers were dedicated to producing films that tackled Nazism as a threat to democracy, they also took care to prevent Nazism from entering into, and influencing, Americans. As Jews, the brothers had to tread lightly on the latter while bombarding their audience with imagery and topics that eliminated any doubt of the former. The brother's two-prong attack both created and censored propaganda.

In an effort to secure the Warner brother's position as Americans, in 1934, through Warner Bros., Harry initiated the development of patriotic shorts intended educating its viewers on the history, costs, and foundations of democracy.³⁶⁵ Referred to as "free-floating patriotism" by historian David Welky, the films focused on a variety of patriotic subjects including American heroes, such as George Washington, Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders, and historic events including the Boston Tea Party, the Louisiana

³⁶⁵ Welky, 150.

Purchase, and the Declaration of Independence.³⁶⁶ Harry insisted that special care be taken in both the distribution and production of the shorts. The brothers targeted prominent organizations for distribution, such as Parent-Teachers' and Boy Scouts Organizations to whom the shorts would be given free of charge.³⁶⁷ Harry chose the recipients as quintessential American institutions rooted in education. To be certain of their salability, Warner Bros. produced the shorts in a similar manner to radio shows and later as feature films. This included using the "same speed, love interest and dramatic tenseness," while paying further attention to the "use of appropriate music at the proper times, [the use of] a swift moving story, [that] ties in with actual historical events and characters." The goal, creating American-themed propaganda, was a delicate endeavor. As Warner Bros. producer and Head of Shorts, Gordon Hollingshead, stressed, the patriotic shorts required a balance between subtlety and propaganda. They should "in no way attempt to force the patriotism down the public's throat," but rather "produce entertainment and ...have the public discover for themselves the high-lights in actual history."³⁶⁸ Their success in the private sector propelled their transition to public screening, cementing their importance in the brother's Americanization campaign.

³⁶⁶ Gordon Hollingshead signed memo, Box 3, First Governmental and Political Activity, Folder 1498B-Patriotic Shorts, June 5, 1934, *WBA*; Doherty, 322.

³⁶⁷ Patriotic Short Subjects, Box 3, Political Activity, Folder 2947, multiple dates, *WBA*. In 1940, the brothers provided the Patriotic Shorts to the US Army free of charge, in addition to the production of more specific Service Short Subjects, intended as training films for various branches of the US Armed Forces. In 1945, the shorts evolved for a third time, produced through War Activities Committee. The integration of shorts for the US government focused on more topics relevant to the war effort or specific branches and tasks. These included: "Women at Work," "Orders from Tokyo," "I Am an American," "Curiosity Killed the Cat," and "Kill or be Killed." Training films were produced for the Army, Navy, Marines, Signal Corps, as well as distributed and profits given to other organizations, such as the British Ministry of Information.

³⁶⁸ Signed Memo from Gordon Hollingshead, (June 5, 1934), Box 3, Folder 1498B-Patriotic Shorts, *WBA*. Similar tactics were used on KFWB; Doherty, 329.

The perceived importance of the patriotic shorts prompted Harry to redirect funds from musical shorts to fund an “Americanization” department, dedicated only to the production of Patriotic Shorts.³⁶⁹ Dubbed “the American Parade Series,” Patriotic Shorts became an integral part of Warner Bros.’ introductory short programs that preceded a feature film—clustered between a newsreel and a *Merrie Melody* or *Looney Tunes* cartoon (or Broadway Brevities). To reiterate the Warner Bros./America connection, each Patriotic Short opened with two waving flags, one for the U.S., the other Warner Bros.³⁷⁰ In 1937, the Academy recognized the brothers’ efforts, bestowing Oscars for both *Give me Liberty!* and *Man Without a Country*.³⁷¹ Additional accolades came from trade magazines that praised Warner Bros. and Harry in particular for his efforts and dedication to patriotism. In regards to *Young Mr. Lincoln*, Harry was praised for “[doing] the industry and the nation a genuine service in this memorable instance.”³⁷²

True to his belief in the power of film to educate, enlighten, and entertain, Harry argued that the shorts represented “part of [Warner Bros.] contribution to a better understanding of the ideals and achievements of this patriots who laid the foundation of

³⁶⁹ Doherty, 321.

³⁷⁰ Doherty, 320; “Hammond Theater Shows Patriotism,” *Hammond Times* (January 3, 1939); “All Warner Brothers Theaters Present US Anthem Twice Daily,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, (January 5, 1939); “Movie Patrons Sing Americanism Drive,” *Chicago American Andover* (January 6, 1939), Box 8- Warner Bros. History, Folder 635-Warner Bros. Studio Prior to 1940, *WBA*. “As part of its campaign to stamp out all ‘isms’ but Americanism, Warner Brothers Pictures corporation showed between features and American flag in technicolor and also flashed the first verse of the Star Spangled Banner. Audiences immediately arose and stood at attention during the brief showing of the flag and then joined in singing the Star Spangled Banner. Harry Mintz, manager of the Partheon theater, said that the feature was shown at matinees and that school children emulated adult audiences in their patriotism.”

³⁷¹ *Give Me Liberty!*, directed by B Reeves Eason (1936; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio, Short); *Teddy the Rough Rider*, directed by Ray Enright (1940; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio, Short). *Give Me Liberty!* received the Oscar for Best Live Action Short Subject, and *Man Without a Country* for Best Short Subject in Color. See Doherty, 321. In 1940, “Teddy the Rough Rider,” earned the brothers an additional Oscar for Best Short Feature. See Welky, 151.

³⁷² Doherty, 324.

our United States of America.”³⁷³ “In producing [the patriotic shorts],” Harry stressed, “we feel that we are making more than a commercial product. We believe that we are rendering a service to the entire nation through the presentation of subjects that inspire greater patriotism.”³⁷⁴ Harry insisted that care was taken to present a specific image of America in the shorts. A testament to Hollywood’s policy of inclusion by exclusion, that image excluded minority groups. A single outlier, Hyam Salomon, proved the only exception.³⁷⁵

The brothers highlight Salomon’s contribution to the American Revolution as part of the *Sons of Liberty* (1939) series. The twenty-minute-long short opens with a patriotic summary of the immigrant’s drive to America (as *Yankee Doodle Dandy* plays in the background). Salomon is introduced as he declares his loyalty in front of members of the Sons of Liberty (SOL). Salomon (Claude Rains) summarizes that he has fled countless years of persecution to and is dedicated to America out of dedication for freedom, liberty, and equality. In America, Salomon finds purpose beyond faith. He becomes a patriot and member of the SOL, dedicating himself fully to the revolutionaries’ cause.

As the British arrive, Salomon aids in burning down homes for the British. Salomon, along with other members of the SOL, is promptly arrested. While waiting to be hanged, he is able to convince his captors of his usefulness as a translator. While working for the British Salomon reverts to spying for the revolutionaries as well as helping prisoners escape. His ruse is short lived.

³⁷³ “Warner Stresses the Educational Value of Shorts, *Motion Picture Herald*, Dec. 17, 1938.

³⁷⁴ Harry Warner, “Patriotic Films,” *Motion Picture Herald* (September 17, 1938), 35; Doherty, 319.

³⁷⁵ Doherty, 326. As Doherty points out, white “British import,” Claude Rains, played Salomon, a financier of the American Revolution.

A year passes. Salomon's efforts for the revolutionaries continue in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There, he is arrested for a second time after British troops discover that his home houses a tunnel intended for revolutionaries. He is sentenced to hang and manages to escape.

Salomon's financial contributions secure his position as a patriot and integral part of American history. Short on funds, Washington's army cannot continue. Congress is unable to help fund Washington and Washington is forced to seek other opens. He seeks out Salomon as the only option to help the revolutionaries' cause. Salomon is interrupted during the services for Yom Kippur, as word arrived of Washington's desperation financial needs. Patriotism and loyalty to the revolution out-weighted religious observation as Salomon convinces the rest of the congregation to make financial contributions for Washington's army. Salomon's personal loans and brokering within the Jewish community ultimately secure the funds necessary to Washington's army to continue. Tasked to choose between religion and patriotism, Salomon chooses patriotism along with the hope that his decision will secure the survival of America, for himself and his children.³⁷⁶ He is an American.³⁷⁷ The Revolutionary War ends soon after. Like the rest of the *Sons of Liberty* series, Salomon is a reminder of the cost, dedication, and contributions of all citizens in the achieving liberty and freedom.³⁷⁸ His patriotism transcends religion.

On his deathbed, Salomon refuses to accept repayment for the loans provided to Washington. Concern for the wellbeing of his family is outweighed by his dedication for

³⁷⁶ Doherty, 326.

³⁷⁷ *Sons of Liberty*, directed by Michael Curtiz (1939; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio, Short).

³⁷⁸ Ibid, 327-328. Hyam's dying wish is to have his children raised to be "good Americans."

America. Before his death, Salomon request that his wife, Rachel (Gale Sondergaard), “raise his children to be good Americans,” before reciting the first lines of the Declaration of Independence. He dies penniless. Salomon’s contributions lived on as surviving members of the SOL maintain that victory could not have been attained without him.

In Salomon’s story the brothers presented their own story. They, like Salomon, were refugees from Eastern Europe. They were patriots, eager to use what means they possessed to aid in a time of crisis to preserve the democratic ideals of the founding fathers. They, like Salomon, were Jews *and* American. Although Salomon’s story is ultimately one of Jewish contribution to American history, his loyalty to America superseded religious beliefs. As such, the brothers, in art as much as in life, continued to whitewash themselves and their Jewishness. As in *The Jazz Singer*, religious belief is secondary to patriotic fervor, despite the use of Judaic icons and depictions of traditions. Salomon’s dedication to the revolutionary cause consumes him and any connection to his Jewish past is erased by his future in his new, tolerant, and accepting, home. Again, just as in *The Jazz Singer*, Salomon seeks, and achieves, a complete transformation. Unlike *The Jazz Singer*, however, Salomon is played by Claude Rains, a white, non-Jewish actor, who bears little to no resemblance to the real Hyam Salomon. Unlike Jakie (Al Jolson), Salomon never mentions that he is Jewish. The audience is left to infer that Salomon is Jewish through the use of religious imagery, such as the menorah and the yarmulke, as well as a direct reference to a Rabbi. Like *The Jazz Singer*, despite its Jewish connection, the short received critical acclaim, earning the brothers another Oscar for their patriotic

shorts. The short would be the brother's last film depicting Judaism in any capacity until the end of war.

In combating Nazism, the brothers quickly realized that patriotic exuberance was insufficient, forcing them shift their patriotic depictions. Warner Bros. anti-fascist films transitioned from the blatant portrayals within their patriotic shorts, to a nuanced, subtle, Americanism that highlighted an idealized democracy rooted in patriotism that, until 1933, Warner Bros. films criticized. Harry in particular, ensured that anti-fascist films did not highlight the brothers' connection to Judaism, believing that hiding the brothers' Jewishness was essential to this phase of their Americanization campaign. Their Jewishness could not be interpreted as the source of their anti-Nazi stance, particularly as many U.S. citizens did not perceive the brothers as Americans.

Hollywood biographer Thomas Doherty has argued that "while tearing into the swastika, the brothers took care to wrap themselves in Old Glory."³⁷⁹ Between 1936 and 1941, I posit that the brothers evolved to become representatives of Old Glory. Through Warner Bros. patriotic, anti-fascist films, the brothers became the advocates for an idealized U.S., highlighting its strengths, history, and uniqueness. They achieved this goal by contrasting the U.S. with fascism, giving the U.S. a voice and agency that demanded its protection and survival from an unrelenting foe.

For Harry in specific, Hitler and Nazism, coupled with the rise of U.S. anti-Semitism, represented the possible demise of their future as Americans. Harry's combined moral and financial wherewithal demanded action to protect his adoptive home and family from a familiar threat. Unlike other studios and studio heads, Harry and Warner Bros. were

³⁷⁹ Doherty, 331.

uniquely qualified to combat Nazism. Warner Bros. possessed a financial freedom that allowed for a critical evaluation against Nazism. Furthermore, the brothers had established a patriotic foundation. As Jews, however, the brothers had to employ subtlety in their approach.

As the celluloid soldier, from 1936 to 1941 Harry's public persona resembled that of many on-screen characters fighting to preserve the character, dignity, and freedom of the U.S. Life, as frequently as possible, imitated art. First, Harry took steps to distance Warner Bros. productions and their viewers from what Harry perceived to be German propaganda. In 1936, the brothers instigated an industry wide boycott of German-created, sponsored, or glorifying film, shorts, or newsreels, arguing that these indoctrinated the U.S. with pro-Nazi, pro-Hitler propaganda.³⁸⁰ Since Warner Bros. did not produce its own newsreels, Harry took it upon himself to harass film companies into editing newsreels to remove Nazi/German content. If the company was non-compliant, Harry barred the film from being screened in his theaters. Most famously, Harry's censorship of German produced films and newsreels applied to the Joe Louis-Max Schmeling 1936 fight.³⁸¹

Second, beginning in 1937, Warner Bros. films relied heavily on a formula that melded patriotism and entertainment with anti-Nazism. Warner Bros. films integrated symbolism, euphemisms, name changes, and most importantly, the incorporation of democratic themes to preach to their audiences the perceived threat of Nazism in specific, and fascism in general. As Welky asserted, Warner Bros. films "ma[de] their points

³⁸⁰ Colgan, 50.

³⁸¹ *Propaganda*, 384; Colgan, 50-51.

overtly known.”³⁸² Films such as *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937), *They Won’t Forget* (1937), *Black Legion* (1937), *Road Gang* (1936), and *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) were all rooted in patriotism and democracy, anti-Semitism and fascism were only alluded to.³⁸³ The productions of *Road Gang* and *Black Legion* both stressed that fascism posed real and existing threats to America, pointing at Huey P. Long and the Michigan-based Klan-like Black Legion organization. Both stories were dramatized versions of facts and events from headlines and promoted the brothers’ drive against hatred and intolerance.³⁸⁴ While *Road Gang* focused on the internal threat of a fascist masked as a socialist threat within the political machinery, *Black Legion* left few doubts of the connection between the terror of the Nazi Party and Black Legion. As Colgan summarized, “Its intolerance and violence against foreigners, non-Christians, non-whites, and real or imagined communists, had its counterpart in the Nazi campaign against the Jews, communists, gypsies, and other considered enemies of the Third Reich.”³⁸⁵

Initially slated to present connections between the Legion’s practice of intolerance and Nazism, *Black Legion* was a cautionary tale intended “to examine the insidiousness of anti-Semitism as practiced and preached by organizations of this ilk.” Due to its contentious material, the Hay’s Office intervened to downplay the anti-Semitic angle,

³⁸² Welky, 102.

³⁸³ *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, directed by Anatole Litvak, (1939. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio); *They Won’t Forget*, directed by Melvyn Leroy, (1937; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio); *Black Legion*, directed by Archie Mayo, (1937; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio); *The Life of Emile Zola*, directed by William Dieterle, (1937; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio); *Black Fury*, directed by Michael Curtiz, Michael, (1935; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Studio).

³⁸⁴ Colgan, 99. In the case of *Black Legion*, Warner Bros. planned its production two weeks after the Pooles’ murder. Warner Bros. anticipated the production of *Road Gang* for 1933. Entitled *Kingfish*, the film planned to base the film on Long’s life. Production stopped in July, following legal threats from Long, only to be reversed two-weeks after arbitration started. Despite granting permission, Long again changed his mind and withdrew consent.

³⁸⁵ Ibid, 102-103.

and suggested the brothers omit any blatant connection between the Legion and Nazi Germany. Proceeding as the brothers intended posed serious financial and censorship ramifications not only to Warner Bros., but Hollywood studios as a whole. As a result, *Black Legion* was re-conceptualized, presenting a version based loosely on the events and role of the organization in the 1936 murder of WPA worker Charles Poole.³⁸⁶ Warner Bros. producer Hal B. Wallis was tasked with giving casting special consideration. Initially, for example, Edward G. Robinson of *Little Caesar* fame was slated for the lead role but rejected over objections from associate producer Robert Lord who argued that Robinson looked too “foreign.”³⁸⁷ The role went to Humphrey Bogart.

Black Legion presents a poignant assessment of the banality of hate and the potential susceptibility of Americans to fascism. It follows Frank Taylor (Bogart), a hard-working, family man and proud American who, after being passed over for a promotion, turns to hate rather than introspection and personal growth. As such, his opponent, Joe Dombrowski (Henry Brandon), a Polish American, is targeted as by Taylor as a “dirty foreigner.” Taylor’s newfound anger and nativist perspective makes him an easy target for recruitment by the Black Legion. In his pursuits for revenge, Taylor becomes both antagonist and protagonist, victim and perpetrator.

Portrayed as endowed with the “bases of ingratitude and the vilest of treachery,” foreigners, Black Legionnaires argued,

have clung tenaciously to their alien doctrines, foreign faiths, and un-American morals. Like poisonous vipers they have patiently bided their time while they’re fed and fattened on the bleeding bosom of our country. Now, enriched with the abs they have chiseled away from Americans and drunk with omnipotent power of their stolen prosperity, they are openly plotting to seize control of our

³⁸⁶ Ibid, 103.

³⁸⁷ Robert Lord, Memorandum to Hall Wallis, Black Legion Papers, July 16, 1936, *WBA*; Colgan, 103.

government, overthrow our glorious republic and subjugate the American people to their own dastardly designs.³⁸⁸

To combat the foreign threat, the Black Legion promised their demise by “fire and sword,” in the promise of creating “one-hundred percent America”—free and white. As hooded figures resembling the KKK, the Black Legion targeted foreigners subjecting them to various acts of terror that culminated in murder. Fearing for their safety, the Dombrowskis flee. Taylor is promoted, enabling further destruction of his character.

Taylor’s moral deterioration is central to the film. Not only does Taylor neglect his family and the job that proved the catalyst to his transformation, he becomes the antithesis of the picturesque hard-working, honest American. The ease of Taylor’s transformation presents *Black Legion* as a cautionary tale of the infiltration of fascist entities and the destruction of morality. Most poignant is Warner Bros. treatment of Taylor’s end. There is no happy ending. For their crimes, Taylor and his Legionnaire cohorts receive life sentences, despite Taylor’s attempts to denounce fellow members in an effort to save himself.

To enhance the realism and potential threat of the Black Legion, the brothers dressed the Legion members in insignia and costumes similar to those worn by the KKK, and used radio commercials as part of their advertisement campaign.³⁸⁹ Listeners were as to be true to themselves and their country.

³⁸⁸ Transcript in Colgan, 104.

³⁸⁹ The film came under attack from the KKK, which sued Warner Bros. for the use of their insignia as part of the fictional Legion. For more see “Warners Charge Bund us US Foe,” Date unknown, *WBA*, Warner Bros. Studio Prior to 1940, Folder 635. See also Alan Gevinson, America Film Institute (AFI), *Within Our Gates: Ethnicity in American Feature Films, 1911-1960*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 144; Tim Rice, *White Robes, Silver Screens: Movies and the Making of the Ku Klux Klan* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015); Colgan 106; “Klan Sues Warner’s on ‘Legion’ emblem,” *Hollywood Reporter*, August 11 1937, 2; “Kluxers Sue WB on ‘Black Legion’ Insignia, *Variety*, August 18, 1937; Jeff Smith, *Film Criticism, the Cold War, and the Blacklist: Reading the Hollywood Reds*

Can you stand the truth? If you can bear the most brutal revelations without flinching, if you want your facts unqualified by any sentimental hodge-podge, then *Black Legion*...is made to order for you. Based on the famous Michigan trial...this picture dares to tell all—groups of hooded figures prowling through the night, whippings, unlawful executions, none of the horrible details have been omitted! ...[It] is the duty of every real American to see.³⁹⁰

Black Legion highlighted the demise of democracy, freedom, and American values at the hands of fascist groups. For its courage, Warner Bros. received industry-wide accolades that included the National Board of Review nomination, and win, for both best picture and best actor for Bogart. “In *Black Legion*,” a critic for the *Literary Digests* wrote, “Hollywood grows up.” “*Black Legion* tells a story so straightforward and factual it might almost be the camera version of a reporter’s Page-One yarn.”³⁹¹ The *New York Times* review of *Black Legion* marked it as, “blatant ‘Americanism’ coupled with persecution of those differing in economics and racial viewpoints...a sort of ‘America for Americans’ jehad in which native-born labor was to carry the banner-and take the risks.”³⁹²

The brothers, however, stopped short of connecting the dots to Nazism. Under the brothers’ direction, producers were charged with the task of creating entertainment within the framework permitted by the Code, and stressing little, if any, direct connection to the threat posed to Jews. The PCA ensured that producers implement similar tactics in their discussion of anti-Semitism as it revolved around fascism and xenophobia. Although the brothers continued to present films that discussed events driven by anti-Semitism, the

(Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 125; *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol 128, 1937,9. As part of their in-depth investigation and attempts to portray the threats within America’s borders, Warner Bros. replicated the hood and robes and patented emblem of the Georgia chapter of the KKK. As a result, the KKK sued Warner Bros. for patent infringement.

³⁹⁰ Ibid, 107

³⁹¹ *Literary Digest* quoted in Colgan, 105.

³⁹² *The New York Times* quoted in Rice, 144.

film's association to Judaism or Jews were seldom mentioned directly. This presentation was not unique to Warner Bros. Most Jewish studio heads hid their Judaic roots for fear of drawing attention to themselves specifically, or Jews in general, that would result in anti-Semitic backlash at home or abroad. To become marketable, Jewish studio heads, Hollywood biographer Lester D. Friedman argued, gravitated toward broader topics to appeal and reduce the likelihood of controversy. Quoting a Jewish studio executive, "Jews are for killing, not for making movies about."³⁹³

The brothers, though cognizant of the general apprehension regarding Jews on screen, defiantly produced films that highlighted the dangers of anti-Semitism. The brothers manipulated films such as *They Won't Forget* and *The Life of Emile Zola* to downplay the Jewish angle. Warner Bros.' protagonists were white, Christian males. The narratives focused on democratic ideology and patriotism. The presence of anti-Semitism, however, is undeniable. In *The Life of Emile Zola*, the brothers assessed the role of anti-Semitism in the persecution of Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1894), by overlapping themes pertinent to the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany.³⁹⁴ The link to Nazi Germany, Head of the PCA, Joseph Breen, stressed to Jack, was such that the PCA rejected the initial script

³⁹³ Friedman, 85; Colgan 114. Colgan points out that the final edit of *Black Legion* omits reference to anti-Semitism (red-baiting and religious bigotry), which was originally presented as a parallel to fascism in Germany which "might have implied that if native American fascism were allowed to spread and flourish, ... could foster the rise of an American Hitler." Interjection from the PCA forced the removal of the Jewish angle. Breen argued the original format was "not acceptable," and denied because it the thematic connection to "inflammatory subjects or racial and religious prejudice." Warner Bros. and the Hays Office ultimately compromised in the final presentation which treated the topic of anti-Semitism, bigotry, and hatred in broad terms to "test out the limits of the acceptability of the treatment of such subjects as religious and racial prejudices."

³⁹⁴ The Dreyfus Affair refers to the 1895 French case in which artillery officer, and Jew, Alfred Dreyfus, is wrongfully convicted of treason for providing Germany with military information during the 1870 German/Prussian invasion of France. The court upheld Dreyfus' conviction despite evidence that proved Major Ferdinand Walsin Esterhazy was the spy. The case is significant and Jewish history because of the anti-Semitic influences that led to Dreyfus' conviction. As Adam Gopnik summarized, "If anti-Semitism didn't start the Dreyfus affair, it fueled it." See Adam Gopnik, "Trial of the Century," *The New Yorker*, (Sept. 28, 2009). Available online <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/09/28/trial-of-the-century>.

submission. In particular, Breen was concerned about the scene in which Zola's (and books authored by Jews) books are burned in a bonfire. "The inclusion of these scenes in your picture," Joseph Breen, head of the PCA, posited, may leave your picture open to the accusation that it is propaganda and, as such, unworthy of serious notice."³⁹⁵ Further objections resulted in the omission of verbal reference to Jews or Judaism, using "Dreyfus" as a euphemism for "Jew." Through *Zola*, however, the brothers provided irrefutable proof of *Zola's* connection to both anti-Semitism and Nazism. The audience is left to infer that Dreyfus has been identified as the traitor solely on his religion. Moreover, the brothers presented Zola as representative of U.S. ideals. He embodies freedom and justice while Dreyfus' persecutors represent fascist ideals.

The connection between *Zola* and Nazi Germany was clear. As Colgan points out, Dreyfus was persecuted by a nationalistic army, which used its powers and influence not only to ensure its own protection but also to enable continued persecution. Despite overwhelming evidence of the injustice against Dreyfus, France persecuted its Jews, not the military. Zola was hung in effigy, his works burned, Jewish citizens and business were targeted, boycotts established, all of which culminated in the attempted expulsion of Jews from France—a reflection, and warning, about events in Germany.³⁹⁶ *Zola's* significance surpassed the connection to Nazi Germany. For American Jews, the Dreyfus Affair was a watershed event in European anti-Semitic history.

The PCA and Hays' Office forced compromises to ensure *Zola's* release. Yet, the film yielded unanticipated consequences. By presenting anti-Semitism, and the prejudice and political injustice surrounding it, as exclusively European, the brothers distanced the U.S.

³⁹⁵ Breen to Jack Warner, quoted in Colgan, 192.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 191-92.

from its own anti-Semitic past and present. Although both *Black Legion* and *Road Gang* discussed prejudice and discrimination in general terms, Warner Bros. films only alluded to, rather than explicitly discussed, U.S. anti-Semitism. While limitations by the PCA certainly influenced the brother's passive position on their presentation of the impact and influence of hate, the brothers' own Americanization campaign ensured that Judaism would not be discussed in an open and frank manner. The brothers resisted an open discussion of anti-Semitism for fear of violent repercussions toward American Jews, including themselves. It also negatively impacted their Americanization and assimilationist goals. That being said, the brothers were willing to discuss U.S. anti-Semitism through the production of a film that could not negate America's anti-Semitic past. In 1937, Warner Bros. production of *They Won't Forget*, a film rooted in the 1913 Leo Frank case, clearly connected the U.S. to its anti-Semitic past.

The brothers' decision to produce *They Won't Forget* was problematic. The film had to allude to the dangers of racial prejudice without ever mentioning the Jews or anti-Semitism, for fear of potential violence against Southern Jews. By discussing prejudice and hate as miscarriages of justice, the brothers protected American Jewry from potential discrimination. Seeped in patriotic symbolism, including a close-up of the Lincoln memorial, speeches, and imagery, the film's omissions illuminated the dangers of anti-Semitism at home while adhering to both the Code and their Americanization objectives. Like other films focused on anti-Semitism and influenced by the brother's anti-fascist beliefs, the brothers took liberties in the film's presentation of the Frank case, up to and including the elimination of racism. As such, the brothers re-wrote *They Won't Forget* to appeal to a white audience. Frank, a Northern Jew and manager of the National Pencil

Factory, was replaced by a white “Yankee” teacher, Robert Hale (Edward Norris). Mary Phagan, a factory child-worker became Mary Clay (Lana Turner), a university student and murder victim. Most other characters and events remained true to their inspiration.

They Won't Forget is a testament to the power of, and necessity for, American freedom and just judicial process. Patriotic American iconography preached America's political and patriotic past, and how it related to the political and social threat of the period at home and abroad. Patriotism, and its democratic foundation, is the primary focus of the film.

From the start, audiences were exposed to patriotic images and democracy, the moral compass in a case driven by hate, prejudice, and the consequences of ambition. From Abraham Lincoln's memorial, and rousing speeches that commemorate democracy and condemn the impact of hatred and prejudice, the film calls for justice and reverence for democratic ideals. The dangers of hate and group mentality are condemned. Like *Black Legion* and the Frank case, *They Won't Forget* maintained a somber end, lacking resolution or vindication for crimes committed. Specifically, both Frank and Hayle are lynched, the perpetrators of their murders never charged for their crimes. While anti-Semitism is not discussed, the ever-present impact of the case on both Jews and Southerners made its connection irrefutable.

Patriotism was also central in *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939). The first, and most controversial, pre-war anti-Nazi film, *Confessions* pushed the boundaries of the Code and challenged Hollywood's passive stance on Hitler, Nazis, and fascism by denouncing Nazism by name. From the use of Nazi uniforms, swastikas, the formal Nazi salute, to the integration of portraits of Hitler and Nazi youth, Warner Bros. made little effort to hide

its position on the threat of Nazism. Yet, true to the brother's Americanization objectives, the film touted democracy, not Jews, as the Nazi target. Like films before it, *Confessions* relied on American iconography, music ("America, the Beautiful"), overt patriotism, and comparisons of American and "Nazi" morals, while carefully negotiating differences between Germans and Nazis. Anti-Semitism was again omitted.

Based on actual events, *Confessions* was an adaptation of FBI special agent, Leon G. Turrou's account of events of the arrests of members of Germany's Abwehr's spy network operating the New York City chapter of the German-American Bund in 1938. The operation originated in 1936, the brainchild of a dishonorably discharged U.S. Army deserter, Guenther Rumrich, who sought financial gains through the sale of military secrets and employment as a spy for Germany. As a spy, Rumrich wavered between a "notorious quack and bungler" and a "splendid spy."³⁹⁷ Potentially, the U.S. Army's lackadaisical approach to enemy infiltration aided Rumrich's success, essentially providing vital and top-secret information without question. By posing as a medical officer paying for data, Rumrich successfully obtained information of military importance. This included the VD rate in the U.S., the U.S. Army's Z-Code, artillery regiments stationed in the Canal Zone, data on the Atlantic Fleet, confidential army manuals, various plans on the placement of anti-aircraft guns, and additional topics considered secret and confidential.³⁹⁸ Rumrich's success ended in 1937 while attempting to acquire fifty blank passports, blueprints of both *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* aircrafts, and

³⁹⁷ Colgan, 309.

³⁹⁸ Ibid. According to Colgan, Rumrich exerted little effort in obtaining the requested material. Rumrich easily obtained the VD stats, posing as a medical officer, simply called Fort Hamilton and requested the figures. The Army delivered the papers personally. Rumrich purchased Z-Code, the signal code used by the Army for transmitting ship-to-shore messages, for thirty dollars from an old Army friend.

“data on experiments regarding the ‘detection of approaching aircraft’ being conducted at the Signal Corps Laboratories.”³⁹⁹ The FBI became involved in 1938, after Rumrich attempted to obtain the bank passports by claiming to be Under-Secretary of the State Edward Weston.⁴⁰⁰ Once questioned, Rumrich revealed his involvement, and provided the names of his co-conspirators. The plan, however, was only partly successful. Agent Turrou’s revelation of the spy network in *The New York Post* combined with the FBI’s own touting of its success enabled many members of the network to flee to Germany.⁴⁰¹

Warner Bros. rendition of the above events revolved around compromises intended on placating the PCA, fellow Jews, and their drive toward assimilation. Breen was hesitant to allow the release of the film based on its initial screenplay, *Storm Over America*, which attempted to include the actual names of the spies and agents on both sides, and present anti-Semitism as part of Nazi ideology. Such presentations, Breen argued, would not only open up Warner Bros. and the PCA for libel charges by spies, agents, and others involved, an active discussion of anti-Semitism violated “Hollywood’s code of silence for all thing Jewish.”⁴⁰² The brothers also had to contend with various other issues including: violating the Code’s “National Feelings” clause, how *Confessions*’ “controversial nature”

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 310. The plan included the abduction of Colonel Henry Elgin, commander of the 62nd Artillery, at Fort Totten. Rumrich aborted the kidnapping plot after Commander Erich Pheiffer, general manager of the Abwehr spy network in the US, was alerted of the plan.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. Suspicious of the request and the name provided, Ira Hoyt, chief of the Passport division contacted the authorities. Rumrich devised a plan in which a phony package was prepared and delivered by a random individual. While following Rumrich, the authorities were led on a chase. Rumrich became nervous, transferred the package transferred to several locations and paid a boy to pick the package up for him.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 310, 314-16; Welky, 117-118. Although both J. Edgar Hoover and Agent Turrou were responsible for blundering the investigation and subsequent arrests of Nazi spies, only Turrou was released of his duties after being placed on leave. Turrou resigned from the FBI on June 20, 1938 and three days later *The Post* expected the first of a multi-series publication revealing “the inside story of Nazi espionage in America.” Warner based *Confessions* on this series. On June 23, 1938, Turrou signed a contract with Warner Bros. for \$25,000 giving them the right to his forthcoming book, *Nazi Spies in America* and his articles, as well as services as a technical adviser.

⁴⁰² Welky, 121.

would be reviewed by censors (both foreign and domestic), in addition to industry-based problems, including violating the industry's for-entertainment-only edict, and its influence on the industry's "self-image as global unifiers." Furthermore, members of the PCA feared the implications of anti-Nazi message as it,

depart[ed] from the pleasant and profitable course of entertainment, to engage in propaganda, to produce screen portrayals arousing controversy, conflict, racial, religious and nationalistic antagonism, and outright, horrible human hatred [.]⁴⁰³

Production of *Confessions* proceeded due largely to an intervention by FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, who was eager to display the FBI's role in deterring Nazi infiltration. The Hay's Office relented. The PCA's apprehension, however, was not unfounded.⁴⁰⁴

Complaints and concerns regarding the production of an anti-Nazi film resulted in swift intervention from Hollywood moguls, diplomats, even Warner Bros. staff and talent. Dr. Georg Gyssling, the German consul in Los Angeles, verbally threatened Warner Bros. employees, including Harry and Jack, as well as Breen, with legal or physical harm on direct orders from Germany in an effort to sabotage or end production.⁴⁰⁵ Jack Warner received an envelope with the blueprint of his home as a warning from an unknown individual. The message was clear, "we know where you live."⁴⁰⁶

Under the code-name *Hot Lips*, the production of *Confessions* proceeded under constant fear. Cast and crew adhered to a strict code of secrecy. To protect their cast, with the exception of Edward G. Robinson, actors were cast from unknowns so as to maintain a level of anonymity, used pseudonyms (for their own and their family's protection) on

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Welky, 117.

⁴⁰⁵ Birdwell, 71; Welky 118; Colgan, 318-319.

⁴⁰⁶ Warner-Sperling, *Documentary*, 59:05.

the credits and, for the first time, credits were provided at the end of the film, rather than at the beginning to protect cast and crew.⁴⁰⁷

Hollywood's Jewish moguls issued the most forceful backlash to the film. Jewish Hollywood was divided on the Warner's tactics against Nazism. Privately, many studio owners joined the brother's activism. As low-key activists, Jewish studio owners contributed funds to Jewish organizations, joined anti-Nazi organizations, such as the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League (HANL), or were members of the Committee of 56.⁴⁰⁸ Publicly, however, many Jewish moguls chose to hide their activism. In general, many feared for their financial bottom line. More importantly, moguls questioned the impact of activism against the potential for assimilation. Hollywood Jewish moguls feared that publicly vocalizing their disdain for Nazism threatened their own goals of assimilation by highlighting their connection to Judaism. Their productions had focused on patriotic entertainment as means of both maintaining financial viability and downplaying their

⁴⁰⁷ Welky, 118, 122. Casting, Welky points out, was of utmost importance for this project. Besides casting unknowns, the entire cast consisted of members of Hollywood's emigre community. This subtlety, Welky argues, "reinforced awareness of Nazi tyranny." See also Colgan 319. Colgan argues that Gyssling threatened that Germany would boycott the film industry in its entirety if they cast any actor who participated in *Confessions*, effectively banning the film in Germany. She furthers that Hitler directly order Fritz Wiedemann, German consul general in San Francisco, to halt the production.

⁴⁰⁸ Welky, 138-139; Allan H. Ryskind, *Hollywood Traitors: Blacklisted Screenwriters-Agents of Stalin, Allies of Hitler* (Washington, DC:Regnery History, 2015), 40-41; Steven J. Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right: How Hollywood Stars Shaped American Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University, press, 2011); Steven J. Ross, "The Politicization of Hollywood Before World War II: Anti-Fascism, Anti-Communism, and Anti-Semitism," in Andrew R. Heinze, Bruce Zuckerman, Jeremy Schoenberg, R.B. Kitaj (eds), *The Jewish Role in American Life: An Annual Review* (West Lafayette, IN:Purdue University Press, 2007), 2. The Committee of 56 was a subsidiary of HANL, created in 1938 by activist Eddie Robinson, and included fifty-six of the most prominent members of the Hollywood studio system, including studio heads, writers, producers, and directors. Its purpose, according to its formal declaration, was to instigate and implement a total boycott of German products until Germany ceased its aggression toward other nations, Jews and other minorities. Among its signatories were the who's-who of Hollywood: Joan Crawford, Paul Muni, Melvyn Douglas, Jack and Harry Warner, Bette Davis, and Groucho Marx. Along with HANL, the Committee of 56 ended its anti-Nazi boycott following the Hitler-Stalin Anti-Aggression Pact of 1939. At which point, the League was rebranded as the Hollywood League for Democratic Action, focused on isolationism. For more on Hollywood's labor activism, see Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring on American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY:Verso, 2011).

Judaic roots. Jewish moguls believed that speaking up risked being involved in ever-present theories of Jewish pro-war, anti-American, interventionist leanings. Thus, while the brothers fought, the rest of Hollywood hid in collective silence.⁴⁰⁹ To this end, Jack raged,

Hurt what? Their pocketbooks? Listen, these cursing bastards killed out own man In Germany because he wouldn't heil Hitler. The Silver Shirts and the Bandits and all the rest of these hoods are marching in Los Angeles right now. These are high school kids with swastikas on their sleeves a few blocks from out studio. Is that what you want in exchange for some crummy film royalties out of Germany? I'm going to finish this picture, and Hitler and Goebbels can scream all they want. And so can guys like you!⁴¹⁰

While the brothers argued relentlessly for their position as Americans and the threat of Nazism, Hollywood moguls argued that the brother's production of propaganda caused the very destruction they were trying to prevent, at home and in Germany. "Warners," Paramount liaison, Luigi Luraschi argued to Breen, "will have on their hands the blood of a great many Jews in Germany."⁴¹¹ U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, Joseph P. Kenny, reiterated this position during a lecture at Warner Bros. Studios in 1940 when he "asked producers to 'stop making anti-Nazi pictures or using the film medium to promote or

⁴⁰⁹ Colgan, 252. Fritz Kuhn, leader of the New Jersey based German-American Bund at Camp Nordland was one of the more vocal anti-Semitic/anti-Hollywood advocates. In a September 4, 1938 meeting, Kuhn outlined a nine-point program for dealing with the Hollywood problem. This included the "thorough cleaning of out most important medium of propaganda and entertainment, the Hollywood film industry." Mimicking the *Judenfrei* tactics in Germany, Kuhn argued for the removal of Jews from "educational, governmental, and national defense positions" in the creation of a "socially just, white, gentile-rules United States and gentile-controlled American labor union free of Jewish-Moscow-directed domination." See also Nicholas Smedley, *A Divided World: Hollywood Cinema and Émigré Directors in the Era of Roosevelt and Hitler, 1933-1948* (Chicago, IL: Intellect, 2011); and John Trumbour, *Hollywood to the World: US and European Struggles for Mastery of the Film Industry, 1920-1950* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴¹⁰ Warner and Jennings, 262; Birdwell, 70.

⁴¹¹ Colgan, 319, Birdwell, 72. Hollywood Jews were not alone in questioning how best to approach Nazism and the ever-present, and growing, anti-Semitism in the US in their quest for assimilation. While many Jews believed that fighting Nazism and anti-Semitism quietly, without drawing attention to their own Jewishness provided the best opportunity to assimilate, other argued that assimilation would only be achieved by fighting oppressive forces openly.

show sympathy to the cause of the ‘democracies’ versus the ‘dictators’.” Such films he furthered “did more harm than good because they highlighted Jewish control of the movies.”⁴¹² If the U.S. was drawn into another European conflict, Kennedy argued, it could not be seen as a Jewish war, or a Jewish cause. Both Harry and Jack countered this argument, stressing the need to speak up for against those who threatened democracy, freedom, and tolerance.

To be certain, *Confessions* reiterated Harry’s own words on the need to fight Nazism and protect Americanism. In a speech before the members of the American Legion, Harry argued for patriotism against Nazism, and on behalf of his (and Warner Bros.) position against the newfound foe.

...There is no room in America for those outsiders who preach intolerance, who are the bigoted leaders of other troubled lands and who seek by every possible means to tear down what our forefathers built. ...I tell you this industry has no sympathy with Communism, Fascism, Nazism, or any ‘ism’ other than Americanism...Drive them out. Make America unsafe for those who seek to tear down what others have built up through the generations since 1776. Drive them from their insidious propaganda machines, drive out their ‘Bunds’ and their leagues, their clans (sic) and Black Legions, the Black Shirts and Dirty Shirts. Help Keep America for those who believe in America.⁴¹³

Again, Harry’s idealism permeated the screen, art imitating life as a means of reaching a much larger audience.⁴¹⁴

Public reaction to *Confessions* varied. As predicted by Hollywood moguls, anti-Semites targeted Hollywood, renewing arguments of Jewish influence and motivations. Nazi sympathizers in Milwaukee burned down a Warner Bros. theater and, in other cities

⁴¹² Welky, 244-45.

⁴¹³ Harry Warner Speech to American Legion, Warner Bros. Studio Data-History, Box 8, Folder 635, *WBA*.

⁴¹⁴ Colgan, 239. Colgan argued that *Confessions* was “in many respects a dramatization of [Harry] Warner’s American Legion Speech.

citizens “picketed theaters, slashed seats and threatened exhibitors.”⁴¹⁵ Known anti-Semites such as Father Coughlin and members of the German-American Bund were among the active agitators. While Coughlin cited *Confessions* as “evidence of a Jewish-Communist plot against American,” others were quick to point out the “Jewish” connection calling the film, “gross Jewish propaganda,” “Un-American,” and evidence of “arrogant, vicious policy of the Jewish monopoly of the industry.”⁴¹⁶

Nazi sympathizers within the German-American Bund critiqued the film as “nightmarish concoctions” based on “the choicest collection of flubdub (*sic*) that a diseased mind could pick out of an ashcan.” Its leader, Fritz Khun filed a five million dollar libel suit against Warner Bros. and demanded a temporary injunction of *Confessions*.⁴¹⁷ Members of the German-American League for Culture, however, praised the film, exclaiming their “wholeheart[ed] suport (*sic*) [for this] excellent educational picture which in the highest sense of the word is fostering Americanism by exposing the un-American spy activities of the Hitler agents in this country.” Even Senator Gerard Nye, who instigated charges of propaganda against Hollywood, proclaimed *Confessions* as,

...exceedingly good. The cast is exceptionally fine. The plot may or may not be exaggerated but is one that ought to be with every patriotic American. As for myself, I hope there may be more pictures of a kind dealing with propaganda emanating from all foreign lands. Anyone who truly appreciates the one great democracy upon this part will appreciate this picture and feel a new allegiance to the democratic cause.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁵ Steven J. Ross, “Confessions of a Nazi Spy: Warner Bros., Anti-Fascism and the Politicization of Hollywood,” in Kaplan and Blakley, 49. Ross cites further attacks. In Poland, anti-Semites hanged theater owners for exhibiting the film, and the Nazis exerted their influence in banning the film where ever they could.

⁴¹⁶ Welky, 129-130.

⁴¹⁷ Ross, “Confessions,” 55.

⁴¹⁸ *Propaganda*, 345. Nye would later cite this film as proof of Warner’s pro-war propaganda.

Once again, the brothers' patriotism came into question, as did their motivations. Some viewers considered *Confessions* a logical extension of patriotic Americanism; others argued *Confessions* manipulated the public toward fulfilling the brothers' un-American agenda. Even before the release of *Confessions* audiences made it their mission to voice their own individual position on the brothers' patriotic leanings. One audience member, Ruth H., warned Breen that she was not only going to boycott *Confessions*, "but all following pictures made by [Warner Bros.]," explaining that she and "Americans are not fooled by the Jewish propaganda today. We know they want to bring war with Germany and want us to fight for them. If they want to fight let them go ahead, but not include us."⁴¹⁹ In her analysis, the brothers were not "us." Ruth H was not alone in this view.

Motivated by anti-Semitism, other viewers questioned the brother's motives and dedication to America. They were the average "American," the "intelligent" and informed who understood the motives behind the brother's "Jew produced propaganda of "hatred."⁴²⁰ Helen S. Walton wrote Jack directly with a series of suggestions on how to approach Americans and the various problems with their films, particularly their attempts to manipulate the American public to their Jewish ploys:

You, of all the big time motion picture producers have been making a (*sic*) effort to give the public 'significant' films. You have attempted to mould (*sic*) public opinion. In some of your efforts I believe you have been moderately successful, in others you have, from my point of view, failed, and for reasons that are purely psychological.

⁴¹⁹ Letter to William Hays, Received by Breen, from Ruth H., Feb. 3, 1939, "Confessions of a Nazi Spy," Crank Letters, Folder 2247, *WBA*.

⁴²⁰ Letter to Warner Bros., from Miss "Jane Doe", Date Unknown; Letter to Warner Bros. from J. P. Thompson, June 28, 1939, 'Confessions of a Nazi Spy,' Box 8, Folder S-151, "Story Crank Letters," *WBA*. Thompson further exclaims, "somewhere in your large Jewish family there are some with German blood who resent to have there (*sic*) race so degraded. You did not hurt any one (*sic*) but you will have more people hating the Jews because a Jew produced this show of hatred. ... Shame shame shame."

Obviously, many of your writers do not understand human psychological reactions. For example, in your film 'Let Freedom Ring' you attempted to jam down the throats of the public the idea that the Jews of Revolutionary times, and one Jew in particular, had sacrificed his fortune for the cause of American liberty. Fundamentally, you can't jam any idea down any intelligent person's gullet and expect (*sic*) to succeed. ...I, along with the rest of the audience was restless and uncomfortable.

The Nazi spy film was on the same order ... to me it was old stuff since I had read the whole affair in the newspapers. Your 'crime' series, prison series, et al, get worse and worse. ...your 'crime series,' now is out of line with American ideals. Americans have modern and bigger problems to face and solve. It's a crying shame to waste your contract talent on such outdated junk.

....let me be positive in my suggestions. The biggest problem that we have in America today is to convince the American people and, especially, the youth of American (*sic*) that the American ideal, or ideology, has more to offer the common man, than any other ideology, whether it be socialism, Russian communism, German Nazism or Italian facism (*sic*). Americans should be made to see that no matter into what strata of economic society a man is born he can rise to any heights his efforts and intelligence can take me (*sic*).

First, and even second generation Americans, and those of foreign birth who have come to American (*sic*), must be shown the contrast of what they might have had in the old country and what they they may attain under Constitutional government, and since freedom and justice is guarantees.

I can think of a dozen such stories right now. Your writers, if they have any brains, should think of dozens more. Give the public hope of the future, positive action, dynamic possibilities for life and watch the box office.⁴²¹

M(r)s. Walton's letter highlights the average American's inability to see beyond the images on the screen. By depicting Jewish contributions to the U.S., the brothers were making Jews integral to the story of America. Furthermore, as Jews, the brothers were privileged and devoted to a version of America that she, and other "Americans" could never understand. She, along with her corresponding cohorts, missed the point in questioning the brother's loyalty to America. In producing an anti-Nazi film, the brothers were in effect producing the type of film she suggested—a U.S.-centric, constitutionally

⁴²¹ Letter from Helen S. Walton to Jack Warner, September 26, 1939, 'Confessions of a Nazi Spy,' Box 8, Folder S-151, "Story Crank Letters," *WBA*. Underline original.

bound, uplifting patriotic film. As far as Harry and Jack Warner were concerned, an anti-Nazi film was equivalent to Americanism and vice versa.

Unlike their other patriotic endeavors, *Confessions* worked on two over-lapping levels. First, by melding anti-Nazism with the basic tenets of Americanism, the brothers pushed for a revaluation and redefining of the meaning of “Americanism.” It was no longer sufficient to believe oneself a good American but do nothing about Nazism looming in Europe and, especially, with Nazism’s presence in the U.S. Silence was tantamount to complacency. Complacency was, in the brother’s opinion, un-American. Only a true American, who sought to protect the freedoms that the U.S. afforded, who understood the privileges of democracy, would speak up against those who threatened it. The brothers risked their own personal safety and gambled their position in the U.S. to fight for a country that repeatedly questioned their allegiance. Second, in redefining Americanism, the brothers challenged Hollywood into activism. Jewish moguls could not aspire to assimilate into a country if they were not prepared to fight for, and protect, the freedoms and liberties they desired. Hollywood Jews, as Americans, possessed the power to influence change, protecting the American dream that they so carefully cultivated and sought entrance to. As Jack so aptly summarized,

Accidentally and purposely we are advertising America to a world that is obviously a little weary of trouble. The comparative peaceful American scene shown on the screens of the world is the best possible ‘twenty-four sheet’ to use to prove the advantages of democratic government as we know it...Each new picture offers an added duty as well as a new incentive. No such ‘salesmen’ of national unity and enjoyable peace come out of nations undergoing reigns of terror...I am more than ever convinced that we have a double duty to perform. We must ‘sell America’ while we entertain the world.⁴²²

⁴²² Publicity Release, November 15, 1938, Jack L. Warner Papers, Box 628, Jack Warner File, *WBA*.

As such, the brothers pushed Americans to question the meaning of Americanism, who would be included, the meaning of America itself, and the cost of protecting Americas' values. Would the U.S. stand up for the values and ideals set forth by our founders or, as *Confessions* argued, would it be lost in the pseudo-patriotism from which its enemies hid their Nazi allegiance? Which "America for Americans" would they choose? American citizens had to unite against a common foe—the brothers were not it. As Harry argued before the Senate hearing,

I will not censor the dramatization of the works of reputable and well-informed writers to conceal from the American people what is happening in the world. Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of enterprise cannot be bought at the price of other people's rights. I believe the American people have a right to know the truth. You may correctly charge me with being anti-Nazi. But no one can charge me with being anti-American.⁴²³

Confessions failed to rally Hollywood or the U.S. against Nazism. As Michael Freedland summarized, "The cinema-going hordes of America either didn't believe what it was suggesting or if they did believe it, they didn't care."⁴²⁴ The film was not a blockbuster. Its success is noted in its production and discussion of the threat of Nazism. Nazism was not a discussed in a Hollywood film again until the U.S. entered WWII. Despite this setback, Harry claimed the film a success, re-releasing it in 1940 following the German invasion of Poland. *Confessions* did not impact the brother's Americanization trajectory. On the contrary, the brothers were emboldened, perfecting super-patriotism and unity. Before his employees and their families, Harry reiterated this position in a speech entitled "United We Survive, Divided We Fall!",

⁴²³ Harry Warner testimony before the Senate Hearing on Propaganda in Motion Pictures, Folder 12567 A-11, *WBA; Propaganda*, 347.

⁴²⁴ Freedland, 118.

As I see it, we have a very simple problem here and it is this: “**United we survive and divided we fall.**” We must unite and quit listening to anybody discussing whether you or I am a Jew or a Catholic or a Protestant or of any other faith—and not allow anyone to say anything against any other faith...because were are confronted with the greatest organized machine, subversive or otherwise, that the world has ever had...

I have seen and I have discussed and I have read every faith. I have been in the Catholic Church; I have been in the Protestant Church; I have been in every church. I have read them all. **I haven’t found one that reached one word of wrong—not one.**...I don’t know of finer teaching in the world than Christianity, and I only pray to the Lord that it survives. I know that everyone of you has been taught the world of Christ. ...Now, if we are going to be afraid to discuss this subject with one another, because I am a Jew and you a Christian, then why not let us get together and at least do the right thing by our families and turn ourselves over to the pagan and to those who want to destroy us, and save ourselves and our families from being destroyed, slaughtered and murdered. Let us give in... Public calamity is a mighty high leveler. Bursting shells and exploding bombs from the skies and machine gun bullets are no respecters of RACE, COLOR, or CREED. Nor is the fact that you are a Republican, Democrat or whatever you are, any protector from the horror of brutal Communist, Nazi or Fascist invaders...⁴²⁵

To save America, Harry stressed, its citizens had to forgo individual differences, uniting to combat the forces that sought its destruction. War was a moral duty of all Americans. Failure to reconcile individual differences based on race or religion would result in the demise of the U.S. The release of *Sergeant York* (1941) presents the brothers’ most blatant integration of Christianity in their patriotic agenda—stressing it as a moral imperative in the survival of the U.S.

To combat the rising isolationist-interventionist divide as the German Army unleashed terror throughout Europe, *Sergeant York* depicted the real-life story of a Christian pacifist, Alvin C. York, who became America’s greatest hero of the Great War. In York’s story, the brothers portrayed war as necessary, an extension of patriotism and a requirement for freedom. Through York, the brothers presented war as a moral obligation

⁴²⁵ Harry Warner Address to Warner Bros. Studio Employees, ‘United We Survive, Divided We Fall!’, June 5, 1940, Box 3 - First Governmental and Political Activity, Folder F023373, *WBA*. Bold original.

of all faiths. Significantly, *York* marked the brother's most blatant connection to Christianity by making York's personal beliefs central to the film. Previous films only eluded to Christianity through the choice of protagonists. This is especially true when Christian characters replaced their Jewish inspiration, such as in Leo Frank in *They Won't Forget*. *York* changed that dynamic.

As a result, war represented a humanitarian and moral imperative for Americans in the preservation of freedom, an obligation

whereby all men were pledged to defend the rights of each man. And each man to defend the rights of all men! We call it 'a government of the people, by the people and for the people! ... But the cost of our heritage is high. Sometimes it takes all we have to preserve it. Even our lives.'⁴²⁶

Harry injected *York* with his own desire to redefine Americanism, to challenge belonging, and to unite as Americans over that which threatened its foundation and beliefs—at all costs. War became a patriotic and moral duty, not a Jewish plot. The film's importance superseded the brother's personal desires for assimilation desires.⁴²⁷

York was a call to arms to inevitable war, intended on uniting a country. Patriotism is subtle and omnipresent, as democracy is presented as a call for humanity. A significant transition in the brother's Americanization campaign, *York* cemented the brother's importance to U.S. national defense.

For their activism, the brothers were scrutinized by rival Hollywood Jewish moguls who feared the repercussions of their actions and the federal government suspect of the brothers' motives. Roosevelt's endorsement of *York* infuriated isolationists who argued

⁴²⁶ *Sergeant York* transcript quoted in Colgan, 636-637.

⁴²⁷ Letter to Lowell Mellett from Leo C. Rosten, discussing Sergeant York, Box 888, Records of the Office of Governmental Reports, Records of the Executive Division - Correspondence of the Director, 1936-43, Folder OWI-OGR, Leo Rosten 1940-42, *National Archives*.

that Hollywood was implementing a government endorsed pro-war propaganda campaign intended on driving the U.S. into another European conflict.⁴²⁸ In the Fall of 1941, the U.S. Senate, led by known isolationists and anti-Semites, including Sen. Gerard Nye, called Harry to defend charges that he and Warner Bros. created anti-American, pro-war propaganda films, including *Sergeant York* and *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. Although other Hollywood studios were represented, Harry and Warner Bros. were singled out by the Senate panel for crimes un-American—a charge that Harry vehemently denied. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and subsequent German declaration of war against the U.S. abruptly ended the hearings. As the hearings ended, the brothers entered into their fourth, and penultimate, phase in their Americanization campaign: Winning the hearts and minds of Americans during the war period.

Beginning in 1942, Warner Bros.' patriotic and early political initiative translated to governmental contracts in the production of shorts and training material, and became the standard formula for both Hollywood and the Office of War Information's efforts to maintain U.S. morale at home and abroad.⁴²⁹ In wartime, Hollywood studios were charged by the U.S. government with the task of creating propaganda intended on maintaining social order and governmental expectations. Warner Bros. was uniquely qualified for the task. Through their film and animation studios, the brothers expanded on their Americanization drive, politicizing their films and shorts and making themselves

⁴²⁸ Colgan, 640.

⁴²⁹ Condensed OWI Hollywood Division Manual, April 29, 1943, OWI Manual, Folder- Manual Material- Hollywood Office, Box 1438, Records of the Office of War Information, *National Archives*; See Alan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The OWI, 1942-1945* (New haven CT: Yale University Press, 1978; Clayton Koppes and Gregory D. Black, "What to Show the World: The Office of War Information and Hollywood, 1942-1945," *Journal of American History*, 64, no. 1 (June, 1977), 87-105.

indispensable to the U.S. war effort. Sadly, this included the adoption of racism as a means of achieving their goal of assimilation.

Between 1942 and 1945, Warner Bros. animation became integral to the brothers' Americanization objectives, preaching against America's enemies and for the duties and responsibilities of Americans. By 1943, approximately seventy per cent of all Warner Bros. animated shorts incorporated some reference to war.⁴³⁰ Bugs Bunny sold War Bonds dressed as Uncle Sam and often found himself in the position of fighting Japanese and Nazi enemies in a variety of shorts including, "Herr Meets Hare."⁴³¹ War duties extended to Daffy, Porky, and the rest of the Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies assemble.

Americanization in war included adopting troubling forms of patriotism. To achieve the goal of assimilation, Warner Bros. animation perpetuated racism. Warner Bros. animators, for example, took caution in how they depicted Germans and Nazis as a means of reinforcing the federal government insistence that the U.S. was at war against Nazism, not Germans. Furthermore, caricatures of Nazis, such as Hermann Göring in "Herr Meets Hare" (1945), "The Ducktators" (1942), "Daffy the Commando" (1943) and "Russian Rhapsody" (1944) maintained normal, non-exaggerated, human characteristics, despite

⁴³⁰ Schull and Wilt, 28-29, 46: Animation Financial records, Box 1, Legal Misc. B00152, Folder 12588B, Trust Department; and Folder 12588, *WBA*. The importance of animation in the brother's Americanization campaign can also be noted in the value of production. In 1931, *Merrie Melody* shorts were purchased in bulk, nine animated musical cartoons for the sum of \$7,500. In 1932, their value increased \$10,000 a series (three series each containing twelve shorts). By 1938, their value had increased exponentially. Warner Bros. called for the production of sixty-five total cartoons (thirty-nine *Merrie Melodies* and twenty-nine *Looney Tunes*) for the total sum of \$673,250. On September 1, 1940 Warner Bros. and Leon Schlesinger reached an agreement in which Warner Bros. would purchase a ninety-one color *Merrie Melodies* and seventy-one *Looney Tunes* between September 1, 1940 - August 31, 1945 for the total purchase price of \$700,000.

⁴³¹ "Bugs Bunny - Any Bonds Today," Box 39, Folder: Bugs Bunny - ANY BONDS TODAY 16mm for TV — data from WWII used/permission for use in 1951, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, Records of the Savings Bond Division, Historical and Promotional Records, 1941-69, *National Archives*.

being depicted in animal form, limiting gags to slap-stick rather than being dehumanized.⁴³²

Warner Bros. animators did not extended the same courtesy to the Japanese. Unlike their German counterparts, animated representation of the Japanese perpetuated racism rather than political tact. In "Tokio Jokio" (1943) and "Bugs Nips the Nips" (1944), Japanese characters are portrayed through a series demeaning physical stereotypes accentuating their otherness, including: donning oversized clothing providing a naïve, childlike, ignorant, appearance while stressing their diminutive stature and, by comparison, American might; the use of bottle-cap glasses that helped to highlight stereotypic slanted eyes; and the inclusion of ever prominent buck-teeth which helped to enhance the "Japanese" accent.

Racist imagery of America's enemies succeeded in differentiating between friend and foe, human and sub-human, permitting ambivalence and disregard for their destruction. Warner Bros. animation was racist because the brothers felt it had to be. Failure to adhere with the U.S. government's collective ignorance as part of the war effort would have further illuminated their difference as Jews hindered their assimilation. Instead, Warner Bros. animation perfected animated racism that achieved three goals: it allowed the viewer to see a reflection of his/her own racist beliefs and patriotism; it reinforced Warner Bros.' patriotism; and, by deliberately eliminating the use or mention of Jews, the brothers reaffirmed their position as Americans (not Jews) and redirected hate.

⁴³² Hitler made an appearance in several Warner Bros. animated shorts besides those listed. They included, "She was an Acrobat's Daughter" (1937- on movie screen), "Nutty News" (1942), "Eatin' on the Cuff or The Moth Who Came to Dinner" (as a fox, 1942), "The Fifth Column Mouse" (as a cat, 1943), "Tin Pan Alley Cats" (1943), "Scrap Happy Daffy" (1943), and "Plane Daffy" (1944).

In animation the brothers created a separate reality in which gags and animals were able to Americanize *and* fight fascism and, by extension, anti-Semitism.⁴³³ Specifically, the brothers used racist imagery that perpetuated the established, and expected, racist ideals of the “enemy” promoted by the U.S. government and mainstream U.S. society. The brothers stressed their dedication to America by discriminating against specific, acceptable, targets, accentuating their own white American affiliation while simultaneously redirecting unwanted attention from their tentative position within U.S. society. In whitewashing their films, shorts, and animation, the brothers projected an image of unity and camaraderie—a visual representation of validation, acceptance, and understanding, of white society. By whitewashing, however, the brothers enabled and validated prejudicial and discriminatory ideals that they themselves were trying to escape. The brothers cloaked themselves in whiteness to be seen as white, while tarnishing the hopes of acceptance for other marginalized groups.

The brother’s dedication to assimilation was also reflected in their alliance with the U.S. government. Through the production of training films and patriotic shorts, the brothers helped train soldiers and educate the public of their civic duty during war. Working with the U.S. Signal Corps., Theodor “Dr. Seuss” Geisel and Frank Capra, Warner Bros. animators conceived Private SNAFU (Situation Normal: All F**ked Up),

⁴³³ This is not to say that the PCA did not intervene in the production and release of animated shorts. For more on censorship, see Cohen, 37-40. Unlike films, animated shorts were not reviewed before their completion. Furthermore, they did not have to be submitted to the Hays Office. A separate censors, working in conjunction with the PCA and the studios reviewed the work before submission to the PCA. Titles such as “It Happened All Night” (a Warner Bros. parody of Frank Capra’s *It Happened One Night*), for example, was changed to “Porky’s Bedtime Story” (1937) by the censors. According to Tex Avery, animators used a process of redirection to get sensitive material past the censors. “if a project was going to contain questionable material [the animator] would add several wilder gags to the script. He knew they could both get by the censors and would be redlined. He figured they would feel remorseful about cutting so much and would let the least offensive one slip by.”

the lowly soldier tasked with instructing U.S. troops of potential problems, limitations, and expectations within the armed forces.⁴³⁴ Private SNAFU was guided by his fairy godfather, Technical Fairy, who functioned as his conscience and dispensed the shorts' morals.⁴³⁵ The series relied on the use of profanity, racy imagery that marginalized and sexualized women (through dress, focus on their breasts and buttocks), and simple language to educate enlisted men of all educational levels on what not to do in combat and as a soldier.⁴³⁶

SNAFU represented every soldier, his fears, blunders, and potential.⁴³⁷ He was, however, white, as were the rest of the U.S. soldiers within the series. Furthermore, the Private SNAFU series continued the racist depictions perfected in the *Looney Tunes* and *Merrie Melody* shorts. Japanese characters bore the same slanted eyes, buck-teeth, pop-

⁴³⁴ For more on animation, including its role during the war period see Shull and Wilt; Eric Smoodin, *Animating Culture: Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era* (NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 4-6, 9-15, 18, 23; M. Paul Holsinger (ed), *War and American Popular Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 280, 306; Karl F. Cohen, *Forbidden Animation and Blacklisted Animators in America* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1997), 37, 40, 42, 50; Maltin, 223-257; Warren Evan Spector, "The Warner Brothers Cartoons: A Critical History." MA Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1980; Matt Crowley, "Exploring the Hidden Racist Past of the Looney Tunes," splitsider.com, Sept. 16, 2014, <http://splitsider.com/2014/09/exploring-the-hidden-racist-past-the-looney-tunes/>; Mike Barrier, "Of Mice, Wabbits, Ducks, and Men: The Hollywood Cartoon," *AFI Report*, 5, (Summer, 1974), 22; David H. Culbert, "Walt Disney's Private SNAFU: The Use of Humor in World War II Army Films." *Prospects: An Annual Journal of American Culture*, 1, (1976), 81-96, Culbert incorrectly associates SNAFU with Disney; Philip Nel, "Children's Literature Goes to War: Dr. Suess, P.D. Eastman, Murno Leaf and the Private SNAFU Films (1943-1946)." *Popular Culture*, 40, no. 3, (June 2007), 468-487; Keenan Salla, "Private SNAFU: What Can a Cartoon Tell Us About the U.S. Military in World War II?" *Primary Source: The Indiana University Undergraduate Journal of History*, 4, no. 2, (Spring, 2014), 1-4; Spenser Russell-Snyder, "Looney Propaganda: Warner Bros. Animation and WWII." Retrieved 12/17/14 from <http://academic.evergreen.edu/curricular/ageofirony/aoizine/spenser1.html>; and Loomis, Daniel C. "Cartoons, Psychological Warfare, and World War II or Willy and Joe Get Drafted." Retrieved 12/17/14 from <http://www.chaffey.edu/fac-handbook/b/pdf/2009Loomis.pdf>. See also Leland Poague, ed., *Frank Capra Interviews* (Jackson, MI: University of Mississippi Press, 2004).

⁴³⁵ Christopher Dow, "Private Snafu's Hidden War: Historical Survey and Analytical Perspective," *Bright Lights Film Journal* (May 2004) Online <http://brightlightsfilm.com/private-snafus-hidden-war-historical-survey-analytical-perspective/#.VL7KF6ZrVjw>; and Birdwell, Michael. "Technical Fairy First Class? Is This Any Way to Run an Army? Private SNAFU and World War II." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television*. 2, no. 2, (June 2005) 203-212.

⁴³⁶ The series covered various issues, including security, military protocols, secrecy, sanitation, and hygiene.

⁴³⁷ Smoodin, 23, 72.

can eyeglasses, and thick accent while Nazis, including Hitler, were limited to a questionable German accent.

Animation played an important role in the brother's Americanization campaign. By calling the Japanese enemy a "Jap," through Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck or through racist physical characteristics for example, the brothers slowly chipped away their own Jewish "otherness" and confirmed their dedication to the ideals of the U.S.—they became Americans and Americas' enemies became their enemies.⁴³⁸ Temporarily, by conforming to racist ideals, the brothers passed as white.

Warner Bros. produced additional shorts, patriotic and informative (as public service announcements), at cost, with the purpose of training, educating, and protecting. At this point, in an effort unify a disparate U.S. population, films represented blacks, whites, and other groups and ethnicities, often together, co-mingling, as a means of projecting democratic unity. Unfortunately, many shorts perpetuated racist and misogynistic ideology.⁴³⁹ Most educated the U.S. public of the various theaters of war, the different branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, and the manner in which they (as civilians) could aid the war effort. Warner Bros. was encouraged by the U.S. government to release the Patriotic series to propagandize war and stress the importance of U.S. democracy. The production of Patriotic shorts for the war effort ingrained the brothers in U.S. military

⁴³⁸ See Wang Xiaofei, "Movies Without Mercy: Race, War, and Images of Japanese People in American Films, 1942-1945," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 8, no. 1 (March 2011), 11-36; and Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott, 1972); and John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1986).

⁴³⁹ VD Control for Colored Soldiers, Project #7268, Box 2730B - Short Subject Films, Folder 5026 (February 15, 1945), *WBA*. Letter to Melvyn Douglas from Frederick N. Polangin Regarding Warner Bros. Short, August 6, 1942, Folder-Motion Pictures, Bureau of - Hollywood Office, Box E0735006, Records of the Office of War Information - Records of the Historian, 1942-1945; Daffy the Commando as War Short Subject, N.D., Folder-Motion Pictures, Bureau of - Hollywood Office, Box E0735006, Records of the Office of War Information - Records of the Historian, 1942-1945, *National Archives*.

history—making the brother’s connection to the war effort irrefutable, their patriotism, undeniable—rendering their Judaism, (temporarily) irrelevant.⁴⁴⁰

Conclusion

Between 1933 and 1945, the brothers adjusted their Americanization campaign in an effort to save America from the threat of fascism and propel their drive for assimilation through politicized patriotic films, shorts, and animation. Warner Bros. films challenged its viewers to question the meaning of patriotism and democracy while presenting images of so-called acceptable citizens who failed to live up to idealized standards. Although films initially only alluded to racism and anti-Semitism, later films such as *Black Legion*, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, and *They Won’t Forget* discussed deep-rooted discrimination. Through omissions, the brothers attempted to save U.S. democracy by asking its audience to think of their past and their future.

In deliberately omitting, or succumbing to “acceptable” racist portrayals of minorities, such as Jews, blacks, and Japanese, the brothers whitewashed their films to attract what they considered their core audience. In doing so, they also attempted to whitewash themselves, becoming, if only temporarily, white in the eyes of their audience members. By adopting American values, including those that reinforced discrimination and a racist hierarchy, the brothers attempted to pass, with the ultimate goal of acceptance as white Americans rather than as Jewish others. They became Americans, while creating propaganda that attempted to redefine Americanism.

⁴⁴⁰ Harry Warner attempted to gift the shorts to the US government’s National Archives before the end of the war. “Correspondence from Harry Warner regarding process of placing shorts into National Archives,” 1946, Box 7562039, Container 11, Reference Filing Relating to Motion Picture and Sound Recordings: 1935-1946, Warner Brothers Pictures THRU WPA, *National Archives*.

The Warner brothers demanded from themselves, their audiences, counterparts, and the government, dedication to U.S. democratic idealism. Insofar as fascism was concerned, the brothers were willing to forgo profits for morality. They created propaganda cloaked as entertainment that forged a patriotic foundation that would become standard in Hollywood. Publicly, and briefly, the brothers presented a united front, forgoing personal animosities in their quests to attain the mutual goal of assimilation. Their collaboration resulted in films and shorts that both challenged America's foes and illuminated the history of the U.S. in their drive to protect an idealized democracy rooted in the belief of freedom, unity, and diversity—that which was defined by the many, not the few.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: “United they Stood—Divided They Fell:” The Demise of the Warner Brother’s Empire and the Impact of Americanization.⁴⁴¹

“Evermore powerfully the passing years show that if men are to build the better world of tomorrow, they must build in unison. Only unified effort, mutual understanding and tolerance can create the stable economy this nation must have to help lead the world to a firmer ground.

Only on the basis of true respect and friendship for all the earths’ races can we develop a civilization which will not annihilate itself. In this high endeavor there is room and need for the constructive labors of all irrespective of color and creed.

Let all remember that no man can take credit nor should he be asked to take blame for his racial heritage. Whoever shall injure a fellow man by reason of that heritage does more; he maligns the creator of all men. In brotherhood the human race will find its strength.”⁴⁴² - Justice Frank Murphy

The Warner brothers are emblematic of the American Jewish struggle for belonging. Divided by ideological differences regarding assimilation, the brothers are a case study for the American Jewish experience. Jack viewed citizenship and assimilation as an all or nothing endeavor. Assimilation required the rejection of his Jewish roots, accentuated the masculine, where misogyny and wealth superseded morals, religion, and family. Harry, on the other hand, was of the opinion that an American was defined as much by his own personal beliefs as his loyalty to, and patriotism for, his adoptive home. He was a practicing Jew dedicated to the teachings of the Talmud. Harry also adopted a masculine ideal, although his version reflected a heteronormative perspective in which a patriarchal family was the core motivation for, and reflection of, success. He, like Jack, sought power, prestige, control, and security entitled to white-men. A fundamental question of

⁴⁴¹ Warner-Sperling, 1:28:02.

⁴⁴²Justice Frank Murphy, Box 3-First Governmental and Political Activity, Folder 1498B, Patriotic Shorts, WBA.

Jewish identity, however, divided the brothers: Were they American Jews or Jews in America?

Warner Bros. films reflected the brother's individual definitions of assimilation. Warner Bros. Studio productions depicted the strains facing the assimilated Jew. Between 1918 and 1945 Warner Bros. films portrayed the cost of assimilation and of the means by which Jews attempted to gain status as "white." Despite their differences, the brothers worked together to analyze and understand assimilation.

Through a film-based Americanization campaign of their own making, the brothers reevaluated the American Jewish experience by redefining Americanization. Harry believed that Americanization too often required a loss of the self, and thus eroded the democratic freedoms afforded by the Constitution. Unable to incorporate the diverse cultural and religious beliefs that constituted the U.S.'s population, Harry thus believed that Americanization, and the definition of America had to change.

The brothers used patriotism as the cornerstone of their Americanization campaign. Through the use of patriotic symbolism and themes, including the adoption of racism, the brothers sought to refine their own status, minimize anti-Semitism, make money, and effectively re-imagine themselves as Americans rather than American Jews. Through a series of interdependent phases, the brothers' Americanization campaign challenged social and industry norms, while preaching patriotism and redefining Americanism in a way that befitted conflicting ideological beliefs on assimilation.

The first phase of the Warner brothers' Americanization campaign, 1918-1928, functioned as the testing ground. During this phase, Warner Bros.' *My Four Years in Germany* (1918) offered a rudimentary approach to patriotism, utilizing hate and racist

imagery that supported the U.S. view of Germans as stereotypic Huns. The film characterized Germany as brutal and animalistic, and the U.S. as benevolent. By portraying the U.S. as a propagator of peace and democracy, the brothers diminished U.S.'s discrimination against Germany, German-Americans, and Jews.

The brother's desire for assimilation also proved significant in the development of socio-political commentary. *The Jazz Singer* highlighted Judaism through a Jewish character, incorporated Judaic iconography, and argued that assimilation was the Jewish character's ultimate goal. In assimilating, the actor shed his Jewish past, married a Gentile, and emerged an American. Judaism is rejected, although not without a struggle, in the conversion to an Americanism.

The Jazz Singer symbolically merged Harry and Jack's different ideas about assimilation. In the film, the past is in conflicts with the future. The past, however, is just as important in the character's identity as is his drive to assimilate and embrace his future. Despite the film's success, Judaism proved short lived as a subject. The economic depression of the 1930s, combined with increased censorship and anti-Semitism prompted the transition into the second phase of the brothers' Americanization campaign: redefining democracy.

Between 1929 and 1932, in the second phase, the brothers channeled the social and economic upheavals of the period into the production of films that questioned if the U.S. lived up to its democratic ideals. Through the production of "out-of-the-headline" films, Warner Bros. films argued that democracy, as the U.S. lived it, had limitations, and had often failed to include all. Unlike in the previous phase, the brothers' criticism failed to directly discuss anti-Semitism or Judaism. The characters are usually citizens

disappointed and victimized by a broken system. They are the gangsters, the prisoners, the marginalized, seeking a life promised by the democratic freedoms within the Constitution. They want justice, security, and acceptance. They are the embodiment of the forgotten immigrants who, despite pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, and making good, are rejected by mainstream America as outcasts.

Patriotism is central to the brothers' critique. The brothers critiqued democracy as patriots in order to make it better, and used Warner Bros. films to rectify democratic wrongs. Their films argue that the U.S. could change for the better, particularly because of its democratic foundation. Warner Bros. films present the U.S. and democracy as benevolent, and as such, it allows for adaption and improvement.

This phase also marks the beginning of the brothers' whitewashing of characters. With few exceptions, Warner Bros. films' protagonists are white males. The brothers' use of a whites-only formula ensured their message resonated with white audience, their largest paying audience. By whitewashing, the brothers created the illusion in which they, despite being Jews, empathized with "white" audiences' plight, projecting white issues and prejudices. Whitewashing connected the brothers to the audience, and vice versa. The formula helped to associate the brothers as loyal patriots and systematically associate them as Americans who sought to improve America, not as Jews who wanted to destroy it.

By critiquing the limitations of U.S. democracy, Harry, in particular, sought to create an idealized democratic society—inclusive, free, and just. By the end of 1932, however, political upheavals in the U.S. and Europe forced another shift in the brothers' Americanization campaign.

Between 1933 and 1941, the brothers explicitly politicized their Americanization campaign. Concerned about the potential impact of the Nazis (and fascism in general), the brothers protected democracy by highlighting its strengths, comparing it to fascism as they combated Nazism. Warner Bros. films illuminated the differences between U.S. democracy and Nazism in order to preserve the basic foundations of democratic freedoms. Through blatantly patriotic films, shorts, and animation, the brothers fused Warner Bros. with democratic idealism. The use of patriotic iconography and music, such as the American flag, the *Star Spangled Banner*, *America the Beautiful*, and additional associations with patriotic organizations such as the American Legion further aligned the brothers with the patriotism depicted on the screen.

By politicizing their films, shorts, and animation the brothers intended to secure a position within mainstream white-American society, but were limited by anti-Semitism. They feared a public outcry against Jewish created propaganda. Redirection of the brother's anti-Nazi motives became central. Until the 1939 release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Nazism was only alluded to in their films. Instead, Warner Bros. films used fascism as an all-encompassing term for dictatorial regimes. Limited by growing anti-Semitic sentiment at home and abroad, as well as by U.S. censorship organizations, the brothers used caution while referring to Nazism. Films that focused on fascism, however, presented a clear connection to Nazism, and its threat against democratic freedoms.

To illuminate the detrimental potential impact of Nazism on America, the brothers produced films that drew from headline news as well as from historical events. Significantly, with two exceptions, references to Jews or anti-Semitism are limited. Instead, films such as *They Won't Forget* and *The Life of Emile Zola*, two films in which

Jews were central in the real-life event, discussed discrimination as an extension of social injustice (not anti-Semitism), focusing instead on the patriotic struggle between democracy and fascist forces.

Patriotism was omnipresent and essential to Warner Bros. films during this phase. Convinced of the certainty of war, Harry adamantly encouraged that the U.S. be aware of the dangers facing it and the errors that had plagued Europe when it denied the threat posed by Nazism. Warner Bros. films were pro-war, and pro-democracy. Unlike other Hollywood studios, Warner Bros. films explicitly fought to preserve the freedoms and values that the brothers viewed as central to the American experience. Harry foresaw the terror of Hitler's Germany for Jews and fought to protect the U.S. from Nazism's terror.

The outbreak of war forced an abrupt end to this third phase in the Warner Bros.' Americanization campaign. In its wake, the brothers embraced a brief period of vindication in which their socio-political patriotic films became Hollywood standards, considered essential by the U.S. government to the war effort.

Between 1942 and 1945, Warner Bros. films entered into its Americanization campaign's penultimate phase. The most recognized, revered, and contested, this phase is noted by its overt, racist, patriotic propaganda. The brothers on-screen whitewashing evolved, adopting racism that reflected the beliefs of mainstream society. The brothers whitewashing of its films fulfilled two goals. First, by including the dominant racism, the brothers effectively aligned themselves with mainstream ideology and, by default, confirmed their patriotic commitment to the U.S. By conforming to U.S. racism and discrimination, the brothers reflected onto Americans their own prejudices, validating white-American's ideological beliefs, transforming themselves into acceptable

Americans. On screen, America's enemies became the brothers' enemies. Warner Bros. productions took into consideration how the brothers would be perceived to their audience. It was not enough for a film to be patriotic. The brothers and patriotism had to be integrated, essentially becoming one and the same. Often, art imitated life, and vice versa. Second, racist depictions helped to deflect attention from their status as Jewish others, protecting themselves from anti-Semitic hostilities, propelling the brother's assimilation agenda. By enabling and redirecting hate, Jews, deliberately omitted from Warner Bros. films, are overlooked—by choice or by force.

During the war period, the brothers and their studios (film and animation) actively created pro-war propaganda. No longer as limited by censors or questioned by rival studios and anti-Semites, the brothers unleashed their patriotic efforts. From training films, to feature films, war bond sales, the brothers embodied patriotism. They were, however, still Jews. And, despite their brief parlay in acceptance, they were not white. Despite their dedication to the U.S., the brothers continued their drive for acceptance, outsiders in the America they helped to create. After the war, their efforts continued.

The final phase of the brothers' Americanization campaign also marked Warner Bros. demise.

Between 1945 and 1955 the brothers re-imagined their Americanization campaign one last time. In the post-war environment, the brothers used Americanization as a tool to survive inquiries about their personal and professional loyalty. An extension of the 1941 Propaganda Hearings, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) attacked Jewish Hollywood while attempting to cloak its anti-Semitic undertones. HUAC investigated Communist sympathizers, anti-fascists, and perceived socialists (particularly

writers) for crimes un-American—communist leanings evidenced by the (government encouraged) production of pro-Soviet films during the war.

While Harry defended the convictions of his staff, Jack did not. Jack's decision to denounce Warner Bros. employees without proof splintered the brothers' Americanization campaign. While Jack defended Warner Bros. by becoming a friendly witness in the 1947 HUAC hearings, the only brother to testify, Harry used his political clout with President Truman by negotiating terms in which to rescue European refugees.⁴⁴³

Americanization as a form of activism stalled during the Cold War. The brother's relationship became further stressed as a result and Warner Bros. Studio dissolved in 1955. Jack's insistence that the brothers sell was motivated by his desire to obtain sole control of the company. Within a day of selling the company and stocks, Jack purchased Warner Bros. from the head of the Bank of Boston, Serge Semenenko. The betrayal devastated Harry, who was unable to forgive Jack. The sale of the company marked Jack's most unforgivable transgression to his family. Harry died on July 25, 1958 of a cerebral occlusion, the result of a stroke suffered after Jack's betrayal.⁴⁴⁴ Harry's widow, Rae, argued that Jack had killed him. Divided, the brothers and studio fell.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ In his various attempts, Harry utilized tactics from early Americanization phases, minimizing Jewish victimization and illuminating the humanitarian crisis as a means of negotiating their entrance. Truman humored Harry's suggestions, but never applied them.

⁴⁴⁴ Warner-Sperling, 1:17:16; 1:17:57. According Jack Warner Jr., Harry's failing health debilitated him. The last instance in which Harry and Jack met, Jack enraged Harry by being in his home. Ill health trapped Harry in his body. Unable to move, Harry shut his eyes to flee from his brother. Neither Albert or Harry ever spoke to Jack again.

⁴⁴⁵ Leonard Sloane, "Jack L. Warner, President, Agrees to Sell his Interests in a \$32-Million Deal; 7 Arts is Buying 33% of Warner," *New York Times*, (November 15, 1966). In 1966, Jack Warner sold thirty-three percent of Warner Bros. to 7 Arts Entertainment for thirtytwo-million dollars. Soon after the sale, Jack was systematically relieved of duties. Today, Warner Bros. is part of Time-Warner, a conglomerate.

Harry's legacy as the head of Warner Bros. survived long after his death. As a result of his influence, Hollywood as an industry became diversified in projects and purpose. Beyond the introduction of sound, Harry's insistence on the production of socio-political films can be noted in documentaries and films that question who we are as a country, society, and our influence on others. Most notably, Harry's influence is in the production of films in which Jews are both Jews *and* Americans.

Jack's legacy is complicated. He will forever be a contributing member of the revolutionary Warner brothers, risking success for the survival of America. That being said, his scorched earth policy toward family and underlings helped to create an image of tyranny rather than as a member of the revolutionary Warner brothers troupe. A man desperate for acceptance, those who knew, worked for, or were related to, Jack, recall him as a backstabber and a joke, willing to betray anyone and everyone in his desperation to obtain recognition as a star. Furthermore, Jack's abuse of power has resurfaced with the momentum of the #METOO movement. His sexual exploits as Head of Production are central to understanding the magnitude of the legend of the casting couch, including the manipulation, denigration and sexualization of women at the hands of Hollywood's sexual predators. Like Harry, Jack's legacy is a reflection of these actions, morals, and ethics.

The Warner brothers and their films are essential to understanding the Jewish transition to American. They are a piece of the collective whole. Warner Bros. films present a microcosm of the American Jewish experience, including the costs of assimilation and the ideological divisions of Judaism. The brothers are integral to understanding Hollywood activism, as well as the role film played in the allied victory during WWII. Yet, modern renditions of Hollywood's wartime contribution have marginalized their influence, or at worse, eliminated any reference to the Jewish contribution. Mark Harris' *Five Came Back: The Story of Hollywood and the Second World War*, for example,

erased the Warner brother's contribution. In their place, five directors—John Ford, William Wyler, John Houston, Frank Capra, and George Stevens—have been bestowed the honor and given credit for Hollywood's wartime impact and legacy.

The Warner brothers represented a struggle that far exceeded film-based activism. Under Harry's direction, Warner Bros. films questioned what it meant to be an American and illuminated the cost of acceptance, including perpetuating racism against other marginalized groups. Together, the brothers helped to pave the way for Jewish entrance into white mainstream society not only by reinforcing Jewish loyalty to America, but also by making Jews invaluable to America's survival. The brothers achieved notoriety through the production of propaganda that used the past to invigorate America and motivated discussion of the future of the U.S.

The question remains, however, if the brothers' efforts achieved Jewish assimilation and acceptance as white. Through their films and personal efforts, the brothers propelled forward the Jewish drive for assimilation by helping to negotiate and influence the role of Jews in America's story. Their political involvement and development of American propaganda, along with other factors which they had little influence, such as Jewish enlistment into the U.S. Army, the Holocaust, migration from primarily Jewish enclaves, and generational transitions, all played a role in the American Jewish integration as white. Harry's fearless dedication to America, however, helped Jewish assimilation through film-based activism.

Today's violence and anti-Semitic attacks against Jews in the U.S. challenge the assumption that Jews fully assimilated or ever gained status as whites. A recent study on Anti-Semitism by the *Associated Press* revealed that 2019 marked a record high in anti-

Semitic incidents in the U.S. Physical attacks against Jews and Jewish Synagogues, harassment, and vandalism reached a peak of 2,107 reported incidents, an increase of twelve-percent from 2018. Jews continue to be viewed as “others,” despite being integrated into white society. Jews, and other minority groups have become targets of hate groups spurred on by an administration that thrives on chaos and hate. As Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) summarized, “Anti-Semitism is a virus. It is like a disease, and it persists. It’s sometimes known as the oldest hatred. It never seems to go away. There truly is no single antidote or cure.”⁴⁴⁶

The Jewish community continues to struggle with its own identity, and the role and influence of Judaism in assimilation. The Jewish community persists in a liminal state, both white and “other,” accepted and rejected. Jewish identity is continuously in flux. As Samuel Freedman argued in *Jew v. Jew*, the Jewish community is divided by two views on American Jewish identity: the assimilated (somewhat religious) Jews, or Pluralist, and the ultra-Orthodox Jews both of whom question the role of religion with an assimilated Jewish society. Theirs, Freedman argues, is a “civil war.” In the current political climate, theirs is a war within a war. The struggles that divided the Warner brothers persist today. Whiteness may prove elusive while racism prevails.

⁴⁴⁶ Micheal Kunzelman, “Report: Anti-Semitic Incidents in US Hit Record High in 2019,” *Associated Press* (May 12, 2020).

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